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HOME & THE HOMELESS.

A NOVEL.

BY CECILIA MARY CADDELL,

Authoress of "THE LITTLE SNOWDROP," "BLIND AGNESE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## HOME AND THE HOMELESS.

### CHAPTER I.

No sooner had old Judy disappeared from the cellar, than Lily, whose slumber had been in part at least assumed in order to escape from her importunities, began to weep most piteously, while Esther continued to lavish silently upon her, every act of loving sympathy that her woman's heart suggested. Naturally selfish, however, and accustomed all her life time to exact kindness as a right, Lily neither showed nor felt much gratitude for the attention of her

companion ; but continued to lament and bemoan herself, as one deserted undeservedly by all the world, and ill-treated beyond endurance. And yet, the very presence of Esther at her bed side might have suggested a different train of thought, even to such an inconsequent mind as hers. It might have whispered to her of that kind Providence of God, which would not leave her to endure alone the consequences of her own ill deeds ; but had sent to her aid and comfort one, who if more desolate and sinful than herself, was, perhaps, for that very reason, better calculated than any one else to lead her to better feelings.

So wonderful are His hidden ways, and so little do they correspond with our human ideas of fitness and propriety, when He regulates the destinies of the creatures He has made ! Had any one been asked to choose an adviser calculated to lead Lily to better thoughts and feelings, he would undoubtedly have chosen for the purpose (he must have done so by the ordinary laws of human foresight,) a person endowed alike with wisdom sufficient to convince by reason, and virtue enough to persuade by example. Yet

such a one would undoubtedly have failed; and, Lily, in her present mood, would have obstinately closed her eyes and ears, and locked her heart in pride, had she found herself in presence of any one, whose life and maxims could have seemed like a censure on her own. In such a case she would probably have endeavoured either to justify her guilt, or to deny it, either have asserted herself and her mode of thinking, blameless at any cost, or have sought refuge in sullen silence from everything approaching disapprobation or reproof. We do not mean to assert that all persons in her situation would have acted thus, or that Esther would have been in all cases the most efficient adviser for their welfare. We only mean to say, that Providence ever apportions the means to the end; and that in this instance, the very contempt which Lily felt for the poor girl who waited on her, enabled her to listen to her with patience, where she would have turned from a more respectable adviser in anger and disgust.

Accustomed, in fact, as Esther had been from infancy to find her good and evil fortune in the

disposition of those in whose company chance or choice had thrown her, she possessed an intuitive knowledge of character which enabled her to divine at once, and without any previous consideration, the best method of softening Lily's angry feelings. A single observation indicative of curiosity as to the past would, she felt certain, by alarming the pride of the fallen girl, at once repel her; therefore, for a long time, she was content to occupy herself in those silent arrangements for her bodily comfort which appeal all the more strongly to the gratitude of invalids, that they feel utterly incapable of obtaining them by any efforts of their own. She bathed her burning hands and brow in water—dressed the wound on her temple with soft rags—smoothed down the rumpled bed clothes, and succeeded in giving such an air of neatness to every thing about her, that Lily felt soothed and comforted in spite of her previous determination to be neither. Her child-like complainings died gradually away, and at last she fell fast asleep. Scarcely however had she slept ten minutes, before the same harrassing recollections which

had made her slumber almost delirious in the night time, again aroused her, and she woke up shrieking "Frederick! Frederick! how could you strike me?"

"To strike a woman," muttered Esther, less in answer to the sick girl than from her habit of pursuing her own thoughts aloud, "that *is* wicked, almost as wicked as to strike a infant on its mother's breast; for God help us! some of we are well nigh as defenceless, and them as isn't are mostly worse than nature made 'em."

"Worse then nature made them?" Lily snapishly replied. "What nonsense you talk! As if nature ever meant us to be anything but what she made us, or as if the brain were not responsible for all our actions, quite independent of any good or bad in the business at all."

"I don't understand," said Esther, simply. "But asking your pardon all the same, that sounds to me werry like nonsense."

"We do good or evil, just as the formation of the brain prompts us to the one or to the other. The brain, therefore, is accountable for all our actions, and we ourselves being mere machines

beneath its impulse, can claim neither praise or blame for anything we do."

Lily spoke these few words with the air and emphasis of one, who felt she had advanced a proposition beyond the power of argument to assail.

Yet, never until she found herself in her present position, had she even thought of adopting it herself, for so long as her life was, at least, in its outward seeming pure, so long she had indulged in dreams of the beauty and fitness of virtue, which were quite incompatible with the doctrine of irresponsibility, as she proclaimed it now.

"Then," said Esther, (quite innocent of any satirical intentions, and merely endeavouring to make Lily's real meaning more palpable to her own understanding by an illustration,) "Then, if your young man did strike you, as you says he did, it were only because he couldn't help it, and therefore, in course, you have no right to blame him."

Lily did not much like this application of her own theory. She had forgotten that sin justi-

fied in one case by such an argument, is, in fact, sin justified in all, but as this conclusion did not tally with her present feelings, she remained silent, while Esther continued in a puzzled tone.

"But why is it called good or bad, if it ainit good or bad in earnest? Or, why is it that summut in our 'arts is always telling we to do a thing or let it be, if we really carn't help ourselves, but whether or no, must do it?"

"Do you really ever feel like that?" asked Lily, in some surprise; for having attributed her own remorseful feelings in the commission of sin, merely to the loss of position it had entailed upon her, it never occurred to her to imagine that such a girl as Esther, born as it were, to her present calling, could be troubled with a conscience.

"I used to, in the beginning, though I well nigh lost the feeling, as I growed older," the girl answered thoughtfully. "It comed back to me of late, howsomdever, and so I am often gloomy now, where I used to be gay and careless."

"And what brought it back again?" asked Lily, interested in spite of herself in this glimpse into the mental history of the other.

"Why it comed back agin?" asked Esther thoughtfully. "It comed back when I seed that which I'd never seed before, and which was not only unsinful in itself, but which didn't know sin, even by its name. I seed a innocent child, Lily! And while I stood face to face before her, I felt crushed, and shamed to the wery dust, to think how she'd have shrunk from me, as if I war a sarpint, if she'd know'd of the life I lead;—or how, which is far more likely, she never could ha' knowed it, even if I telled it to her word for word, since her werry innocence would have perwented she understanding."

Lily groaned aloud. Time was, when she would gladly have seized on such a theme, to ring changes on its beauty, but now, alas! she was mute perforce. Too well she knew, though she would not acknowledge it, even to herself, that the glory of innocence had gone out from her, and that its beauty had departed; too deeply she felt, and too thoroughly comprehended,

why it was, that while the street girl at her side spoke, with hushed reverence, of a little child, because of its unconscious purity, she addressed her kindly indeed, but carelessly, as she would have any other fallen sister, and with just such a change in look and manner, as we might expect in one who had stept from the consecrated precincts of a church, suddenly, into unhallowed ground.

No wonder that she groaned aloud, or that while cursing in the very depth and bitterness of her soul the day, the hour, and more than all the rest, the man, who had been the cause and prompter of her fall, she covered her face with both her hands, and burst into a passionate fit of tears.

Esther saw that she had wounded her companion deeply, and partly guessing at the cause, (for the look of angry shame on Lily's face, in the one brief moment that she had suffered it to be seen was not to be mistaken,) she tried to repair her blunder by saying humbly :

“ As I were a saying, I felt all this, and more, that I carn't altogether put rightly into words

just now, whenever that lone little one was near me; and in some sort I feel it still as I sit beside you, and listen to your soft voice and pretty words, such as I never heard before except from she— ”

“ Beside me,” cried Lily, passionately. “ And do you not know that the world esteems me fallen and degraded as yourself? ”

“ The world is more nor half wrong then,” replied Esther, checking the angry emotion of pride which beneath Lily’s contemptuous words had sent the blood crimson to her forehead. “ More nor half wrong, as it always is, when it ain’t out and out wrong altogether, which may-happen it is the oftenest. You have fallen, you says, and that may be, for you wern’t bringed up to wot you are that’s certain; but fallen I ain’t, and carn’t be, since I never were anything but wot I am this moment.”

Esther paused, for her mind was struggling amid thoughts and feelings to which she had neither sufficient knowledge, nor sufficient range of language to give utterance in words. Perhaps it would be a true translation of those thoughts

to say, that Lily seemed to her as an angel newly fallen, the brightness of whose aspect had been dimmed indeed, but not as yet entirely destroyed by sin; for if the interior beauty of the soul had vanished, the grace and refinement which it had conferred, still clung round the outward form, and regulated all its movements. But for herself, the poor street girl felt more bitterly than ever, that her lot must have been cast from the first in the ways of sin, so impossible did she find it to recall a time when she had been less degraded than she was at present.

Life, had in fact, commenced for her at that lowest point towards which Lily was only tending, slowly tending perhaps, yet not for that less surely; if nothing should interpose between her and the downward movement.

It may seem like a libel upon our race to say it, yet surely there is often something in this poor human heart of ours which is not displeased at the avowed inferiority of another. Crushed and conscious of being crushed, as Lily no doubt was, yet did she feel somewhat raised in her own esteem by Esther's candid

confession to a deeper degradation still. Most heartily indeed did she concur in that decision; for judging herself rather by the refinements of our nature than by the moral law that is meant to bind it, so long as she could feel that her tastes were still cultivated and her pleasures still refined, so long would she continue to rank herself above Esther. For it never would occur to her that if each were to be judged hereafter by the opportunities given to each, the child of the slum and back street would probably be held less guilty in the estimation of eternal justice, than she who, bred in ease and luxury, had had no other temptation to depart from virtue than the lawless dictates of her own sinful heart.

With this soothing consciousness of superiority in her mind, it was rather from a wish to gratify her vanity by hearing Esther's words repeated, than from any desire to impress a contrary idea on her companion, that she persisted in her first assertion.

"Nevertheless, the world will both think and speak of me as if there were no difference between us."

"And doen't they know then," said Esther with an earnest sadness in her voice that was very touching. "Doen't they know that a lily as is broken is a lily still; while a weed, for as flourishing as it seems, is nothin' but a weed for all that! And that is jist the diff'rence atween we. I've growed in rough places till I'm as rough as they, and so I cares nothin' wotever for things as crushes you to atoms. The blow that sent *you* into the streets in sorrer and dismay, *I'd* have given back as I got it, and forgiven the next minit."

"He had been drinking," said Lily, with that lingering instinct of a true woman, which ever prompts her to extenuate the guilt of the beloved one. "He had been drinking; or surely he could not have done it."

"Drinkin' had he? Then you should ha' let him be," said Esther. "A drunken man is a beast, and should be awoided accordin'. You should ha' let him alone till he had slep' off his licker, Lily."

"Let him alone," said Lily. "I would have been glad enough at first, I promise you, if he

would have let me alone, instead of forcing two of his drunken, gambling associates on me, in spite of all that I could urge against it."

"At first," repeated Esther, with a significant stress upon the last word. "But afterwards; wot then?"

"Afterwards," sobbed Lily, with an evident consciousness that she herself had not been altogether guiltless in the matter; "he got angry just because I wouldn't let them drink gin and play chicken hazard in our only sitting room. An angel couldn't have stood it, Esther, and I answered him rather too crossly, I suppose, and he answered me, and so it went on from one thing to another. The brutes that were with him jeered him on all the time, until at last he grew absolutely like a maniac in his fury, and swearing that he would leave me, and never come back, made a rush at me that knocked me down. My head struck against the fender, and I was quite stunned by the blow, but when I recovered my reason, it was nearly dark; and oh, Esther, I was alone! He had gone away, as he said he would—gone quite, quite away; and there is no

one to love or to care for me now, for he was the only one left, and I know he will never come back."

"Yes he will, tho'," said Ester, soothingly, "men always says them sort of things to frighten we like; but to do 'em justice they seldom acts as bad as they threatens. He'll come back agin; you'll see him in no time."

"He won't," said Lily, in a voice of smothered anguish. "Oh, Esther, Esther, I have not told you all as yet; I haven't told you that in his drunken rage he taunted me, because there was no abiding tie between us—nothing in short to prevent his casting me from him at a moment's notice. My God! my God! who could have thought it," cried the wretched child wringing her hands piteously together. "He whom I trusted so! He who had so sworn! He to taunt me with it now! He to call me—Oh, Esther, that terrible word he used is still ringing in my ears, and he flung me from him as he said it, as if he felt in truth that I was but a broken plaything—a used up garment. He flung me from him; and when I recovered my senses I felt as I used

to do when I was a little child and they left me in the dark alone—trembling all over and afraid to move."

"Poor soul; no wonder," said Esther, soothingly. "But you did move at last, for I comded down the street jist as you left the house, and seeing you look so wildlike, thought it best to foller."

"Left the house," repeated Lily. "Yes; I rushed out with some vague notion of throwing myself into the river, I believe; but just as I turned the corner I met my brother, and hardly knowing what I did, flung myself into his arms."

"And he?"

"He too, flung me off," cried Lily with another burst of passionate emotion. "Flung me off as if I had been a reptile. Oh, Esther, Esther! when I think of it even now, I feel as if I should go mad or die of sorrow."

"Poor crittur! Death or madness be the best thing left for you, I'm afeard," thought Esther; but far from giving utterance to this conviction, she tried to encourage Lily by saying cheerfully—

"Who knows ar'ter all but wot he may be werry sorry now for having been so proud-like to you."

But Lily only shook her head in absolute unbelief.

"He may ha' been startled like jist at first into doing of an unkindness, or he may ha' been mistaken (who knows) even in his thoughts about you," continued Esther good naturedly, trying to lessen the appearance of deliberate desertion in Frank's conduct. "Dear Lily, I don't want to fret you, but remember you war runnin' like a mad thing—your hair all loose about you, and your face streamin' blood as if you had been a fightin'."

"Oh, Esther," cried Lily, in a voice of inexpressible anguish as the picture thus rudely drawn brought a new and yet more harassing idea to her mind. "You don't mean to say—you can't surely think it possible that he imagined I had been drinking."

"And what would you've thought yourself, if you had met him in that ere fashion running thro' the streets at night?" Esther pointedly de-

manded. Lily groaned aloud—she could not help it.

“But if he seed you now,” continued Esther, in a low plaintive voice, “if he seed you now,—pale, sick, and full of sorrier as you be—he wouldn’t think it of you now—he wouldn’t, and he won’t, if you’ll only tell me where to seek him, and let me bring him to you. I wouldn’t fret you on no account, nor do nothing you don’t wish to,” she persisted, as Lily for sole reply impatiently shook her head. “But bethink you well—it ain’t too late for you —you ain’t a been a trampled and a put upon as I have, till wickedness sits easy on me—easier nor goodness. The flower’s a flower still, and might be made to bloom agin, if a brother’s hand war stretched to save it. And it would be sure-lie! Sure-lie it would be, if you’d only let me bring him here. He never could close his heart against you, if he seed you as I do lyin’ there this minit.”

Esther had spoken so rapidly and earnestly that Lily had hitherto been unable to interrupt her; but now at last she started up in bed, her

face convulsed with shame and anger, and cried out:—

“Be silent will you! Be silent if you would not drive me mad! Esther! Esther!” she continued, with a vehemence of passion that made fearful contrast to her pale face and child-like features. “If ever you dare to bring my own people here—if you dare so much as to hint at my existence to them, I swear I will commit suicide at once. Yes, at the very first sound of their footsteps outside that door, I will kill myself, if I am forced to do it by strangling myself in my own hair. Living, they shall never insult me with their pity; and they will not be inclined to mock me, I suppose, when they gaze upon me dead!”

So rapidly and incoherently was all this uttered, that it was in vain to attempt explanation or interruption. Tearing the beautiful hair with which she had threatened to do such an evil deed, Lily went off from one fit of hysterical spasms to another, until terrified at the length and violence of the attack, Esther would gladly have run for a doctor, had she not

feared that her patient would have destroyed herself in her absence. Bitterly did she now regret the words, by which she fancied she had excited this storm of passion in the sick girl's soul. Yet it was not, as she deemed it, her proposal to bring Frank to his sister's bedside only, but her simple admiration of the innocence of Aileen, her bitter self-contempt for her own life of guilt as well, that had given the last impulse to Lily's wakening conscience, and fixed the idea of her own degradation irrevocably in her mind. All the false reasoning and sophistical delusions, all the fantastical arguments about fate and about necessity, by which she had hitherto endeavoured to palliate her sin, went down before those simple words of truth, so simply and so unconsciously pronounced; and in the first terrible moment of self-convicted guilt she would, as she had said most truly, gladly have destroyed herself. But Esther was a vigilant and judicious nurse, and her eye was never off her patient for a moment. Twice she put back the long hair which the unhappy girl was twisting and tightening round her neck in a fearfully threatening manner;

twice she held her down, gently but firmly, in her bed, as she tried to spring from it to reach a knife upon the table. If Lily lived through the madness of remorse and shame that raged in her bosom through the next few hours, it was to the care and kindness of the girl, whom she had despised as a creature of another order, that she owed the boon of life—that boon so valuable at all times; but, above all price or measure, when the stain of unrepented sin is on the soul, and the life to be abandoned may too possibly be exchanged, for that in which the ‘worm that dieth not,’ is set for ever.

At last, the poor patient’s struggles ceased, and exhausted nature found repose in sleep, while Esther sat beside her, amid deeper thoughts than she had ever known before. In this guise many hours passed away, though they hardly seemed to her like minutes, so absorbed was she in her own sad musing. At last, a faint sigh warned her of the awaking of her patient, and immediately afterwards Lily spoke again, but in a voice so changed by weakness, that it seemed like the voice of a little child.

"Esther, I am so faint and weak, I cannot see at all."

Weak, indeed, she evidently was, so weak that the terrified Esther flew to old Judy's bottle of reserve, and administered a little of its contents at once. This revived her, and in a few minutes she opened her eyes again. "Esther, I am dying!" she whispered faintly. Esther thought so too, and did not contradict her. "And, if I am," continued the sick girl—"or when you think I am, take this ring, (stay you had better pull it off at once, for just now I may not have strength to bear it), and go to Hampstead. There you will look for a villa called the 'Ferns.'"

Lily could not speak the old familiar word, without an agony of grief that well nigh brought back convulsions.

"Ask, there, for Miss de Burghe—for no one else, mind—ask for no one else, and tell no one else your errand—you must swear to me, you will not!"

"I swears it," here Esther eagerly interposed, anxious to remove every obstacle to the lost girl's communicating with her family. "Give her this

ring," Lily resumed, "and say to her, 'Lily is dying.' And if she will—if she is not too proud—if she will come and say 'Good-bye.' But mind, only when I am dying, Esther—only when I am positively dying."

"Only then," said Esther, tying the ring to a corner of her handkerchief.

"And to no one else," repeated Lily, faintly. Then, as if satisfied of Esther's truth, and content to rest upon her promise, she closed her eyes once more, and between weakness and the unusual stimulant she had just received, was soon fast asleep again. The day, was by this time declining, and Esther heard with impatience the old Irish woman's foot upon the stair-case. She feared the bustle of her entrance would awaken Lily, but in this she had miscalculated the kind-hearted consideration of poor Judy, who opened the door as cautiously as she could have done herself, and whose habitual "God save all here, and how is the poor colleen now?" were uttered in so low a voice, that it would not have disturbed the most irritable of sleepers.

"Poor Lily! Not long for this world, I'm

sore afeard," said Esther sadly. "P'raps you'll sit by her a bit now, while I goes on an errand for her."

"Musha then, won't I, and wid a heart and a half besides?" responded the good old creature, forgetting even the usual preparation for her "darlint cup of tay," in her kindly sympathy with a suffering fellow creature.

"And it's Lily that they call you, is it?" she muttered to herself, as she gazed on the sick girl after Esther had left the room. "Ochone, my sorrow! but it's crushed and faded Lily that you are. And may the blessed mother of God recaive you this night to glory, for shure it's only in heaven that such lilies as you do blossom rightly, afther wanst they've been crushed and trampled on, in this cowld, hard woreld we live in!"

## CHAPTER II.

EVELYN was deep in reverie one morning in the pleasant library of the Ferns, and Mrs. Montgomerie was seated, as usual, at her knitting beside her, when Denis abruptly entered the room to say there was a person at the hall door, who desired to speak to her.

"A person! What sort of a person? A man or a woman, Denis?" asked Evelyn, feeling rather surprised at the fact of his having descended to do the work of them "powdered spalpeens in yellow breeches," as he usually designated the footmen belonging to the establishment, by taking on himself this announcement of a visitor.

"A young woman, miss. I met her in the avenue, and as she asked to see you particular, I towld her I'd take in her message myself—for a rayson I had," he added, coming closer to Evelyn, and looking mysterious.

"And your reason, Denis?"

"Why you see, miss, she's a quare looking bit of a body, with big black eyes, and though not to say so dark in the complexion, yet in every other respect the very moral of that thievin' gipsy we fell in with at Southampton."

"Do you mean the fortune teller with the little girl?" cried Evelyn, her interest in her visitor awakened in a moment.

"I do, miss. Masther Wyllie was with me in the avenue, and he remembered her the minute he seen her, but I bid him not to let on to do so, for fear of frightenin' her away, because I never can get it out of my head but what she knows more of Masther Frederick's doin's nor we do?"

"But what makes you think so, Denis? She was not with him when you thought you saw him at the fair."

"Not when first I seen him; but when I catch sight of him aftherwards, he was walkin' with a man that I'd met with her before. And if she knows any one as knows Masther Frederick, not a doubt but she knows him likewise, and could tell us if she chose it, what he done with Miss Lily afther we lost sight of them that night."

"Perhaps you and Wyllie are both mistaken, after all," observed Evelyn after a moment's thought. "Gipsies have such a general resemblance to each other that you might easily have been misled."

"May be," said Denis incredulously. "But such wicked looking eyes as them two big ones of hers don't grow on every bush, Miss de Burghe. I never seen the likes of them before that day myself, and may I never sin if I wish to see them again, afther once she's towld us all she may happen to know of Miss Lily."

"I think you wrong those black eyes when you call them wicked," said Evelyn, speaking rather, however, to herself than Denis, as she tried to measure in her own mind the possible

character of one, upon whom, if he had guessed rightly as to her acquaintance with Frederick, so much might be now depending. “ Wild passions there are in those eyes, no doubt, but much also I should say that promises for good.”

“ Well, miss,” replied Denis, “ may be you’re right and I’m wrong, and I’d be loath indeed to take away the char-a-ckter of any christian woman—if so be as this gipsy is a christian afther all. Be that as it may howsomdever, them bitther black eyes of hers have been in my drames ever since first I seen them, and my mind misgives me but what they bode little good to any one, that has any thing to say to her.”

“ But don’t you know that dreams go by contraries?” said Evelyn smiling, and trying to shake off the impression, which, in spite of herself his gloomy forebodings were making on her mind. “ Dreams go by contraries, so it is quite reasonable to expect better things from those black eyes than you are inclined to hope for. Show her into the dining room, will you—or stay, I will fetch my bonnet and go to her in the garden.”

" Well, if it isn't yourself that has the wit of the woreld!" cried Denis, in a tone of unfeigned admiration. " Sure that's just what she bid me tell you, only I didn't like to, lest you should be vexed at her bouldness. I wanted her to step inside the hall doore till I give you her message; but says she to me, says she in her outlandish gibberish, which I don't well remember: ' Tell the lady,' says she, ' that I'll be waitin' for her under the big beech tree forntent the gate of the avenue.' "

" May I never sin if she isn't off!" he exclaimed, as he suddenly discovered on turning round that Evelyn had already left the room; " off like a shot, and without the bit of advice I intended to give her. I'd best be afther her at once, howsomdever, for I amn't too sure but what that black-eyed divil is up to mischief. And isn't it lucky, Miss Honor," he added, addressing Evelyn's maid, who had just entered by order of her mistress, to take her place beside Mrs. Montgomerie, " isn't it lucky the masther didn't get it into his obstinate ould head to take me with him to Southampton, for sorra

know I know what the craythur would have done without me. Mr. Sutherland doesn't care a traunen about her (more shame to him for that same), and now that Masther Frank has flitted, it's badly off for advice she'd be, if she hadn't me or the docthor to give it."

Whatever Evelyn herself may have thought of the value of Mr. Denis's advice, a shadow of regret certainly crossed her mind as she took her way down the avenue, at the absence of his master, who, as ill luck would have it, had been compelled to start that very morning for Southampton on business that admitted of no delay. True, he had promised to return the same evening, but Evelyn felt instinctively that the critical moment had arrived at last, and that she would have to decide on some positive mode of acting, long before he could possibly be expected at the "Ferns."

Not having waited the conclusion of Denis's long speech, she was at first a little at a loss where to look for Esther. The latter, however, was on the watch, and no sooner saw her coming, than she stepped boldly out to meet her, those wondrous eyes

which had so troubled the Irishman's dreams being fixed all the while half in defiance, half in questioning, earnestly upon her. There was indeed no mistaking such orbs of fire; and though the wash which had dyed her face and hands into hues of gipsy darkness, had been laid aside, Evelyn recognised her at once as the heroine of her Southampton adventure. Before she had time to intimate this recognition, however, the other had opened the conversation by saying with the air of one who felt that her business admitted neither of apology nor delay :

“ Miss De Burghe, I con-clude?”

And on Evelyn nodding her head in assent, she went on :

“ I wants to speak to you, miss, somewhere free from eavesdroppers or interruptions. No, not in the house,” she added impatiently, as Evelyn made a move in that direction ; “ sure-lie there must be walks about here, where we can talk for a few minutes without being spied on.”

Prudently determined to humour her visitor, Evelyn instantly led the way to a walk where

the tall trees secured them from all chance of observation from the villa.

"Now," she said, turning suddenly round upon the girl, "what is it you have got to say?"

But in no way taken by surprise, Esther answered quietly: "I brings a message to you from one as has been sorely troubled of late, both in mind and body."

"Frederick?" cried Evelyn, whose first thoughts were always of her brother,

"Not Frederick, but his victim!" Esther solemnly responded.

There was a momentary pause, for Evelyn felt sick and giddy; but the word 'Lily' at last seemed rather to stumble than fall intentionally from her lips.

"Lily it is," responded Esther. "Miss de Burghe," she continued earnestly, and vehemently, "I don't want to know nothing wotever of your secrets, or hers. I don't want to know wot she may happen to be to you, nor wot you may be to she. She never telled me, and I never asked her, though she gev me a message and a token

which I promised should fall into no hands but yours."

"It is her ring!" cried Evelyn, joyfully seizing upon the trinket which Esther now presented as her credentials.

"I comded up with it last night," the girl continued. "But it were late, and the gates were closed already, and as it was little likely they would be opened at any hour for such as I, I went back as I came, in course. Howsomdever, I've been a dodgin about here agin ever since day-dawn a'most, in hopes of meetin' you alone, because I passed my word to her, that I would give her token to no one but to you, and that too only when she was a dying."

"Dying!" repeated Evelyn, faintly, her own heart almost seeming to die within her at the dim forboding the word brought with it. "Dying! and of what?"

"Of wot!" repeated Esther, with an intense and concentrated bitterness of expression that it is impossible to convey on paper. "Of a broken heart to the best of my belief, and sartainty, and of nothing else wotever; but that is a killin' of

she, as sure-lie as a fever or a death-wound might do."

"Oh no, no, do not say it!" cried Evelyn, her tears flowing fast at the bare suggestion. "She is sad, no doubt, and sorrowful, and broken-hearted too, poor child, no wonder! But we will bind the broken heart, we will smile away the sorrow. Yes, if you will only take me to her, I promise that she shall be more to me than sister or even child could be, and that my whole life shall be given to lighten hers; but dying! Oh, no! she shall not die of a broken heart if I can help it; and, besides, people do not often die of sorrow, though God knows! it seems like a miracle they do not."

"They don't often die of sorrow sure-lie," repeated Esther, slowly and emphatically. "But they do sometimes, and mostly then, when shame and unkindness and despair is added to the sore distress that is crushing them to the grave already."

"Shame and distress, alas!" said Evelyn, "I fear she must endure, for they are the guerdons of sin, and nothing can entirely save

her from them. But despair need be no man's portion, since it is forbidden even to the most sinful to despair."

"Wot?" cried Esther, quickly, and almost fiercely, "not to despair, when the man as brought her to this pass, mocks her to the face, and the brother that she clung to, flings her from him to the dust. Who would you have her go to, when these disdain her? Or where is your gift to keep her from that black despair as has its only resting place in the rolling river?"

"I would have her go to God!" said Evelyn, speaking all the more impressively that her words flowed softly and quietly from her lips. "I would have her go to God! because, Esther, He who has called all sinners to repentance has surely pledged Himself to receive them when they come!"

"To God!" echoed Esther, over whose heart Evelyn's words seemed to flow like a strain of softest music. "To God—will God then hear we, think you?"

"Nay, can you doubt it, Esther?"

"Lily do," said the other, feeling more puz-

zled and confused than ever between Evelyn's solemn words, and many of a very opposite tenor, by which, in the course of even their short companionship, Lily had contrived to darken such faint glimmerings of faith as had existed in her breast before.

"Poor Lily," said Evelyn, compassionately. "And tell me then what is left to Lily now, if God will not hear her, or there is no God?"

"Nothin'," said Esther, sadly. "I knows that too well—nothin' wotever but despair and madness."

"Nothing, indeed," repeated Evelyn. "She has done that for which, rightly or wrongly, the world rejects her, and the dearest female friend she has on earth would blush to be seen speaking to her now! But with God it is quite different. He knows no distinction between the innocence that has never fallen and the guilt that has been effaced by penance. The sin repented of is to Him as if it had never been, and therefore while the Pharisees of this world are bidding her to go out from the midst of them, it may well be perhaps that He is whispering in the ear of

that forlorn one, ‘that many sins are forgiven to those who love much.’”

“Say it agin, Lady! say it agin!” whispered Esther, laying one trembling hand in her eagerness on Evelyn’s arm. “Sich words as them come seldom enough to the outcast’s ear, no wonder they are sweeter nor the sweetest music to it.”

Evelyn did as she was requested; and then there was a long pause, which she did not attempt to break, because she saw that her listener was deeply moved, and that the fire of her dark eyes was quenched in tears.”

“And if God is like that to we,” Esther at last observed, following out as she always did her own peculiar train of thought, and putting it promptly into words; “If God is like that to we, people hadn’t ought to look down upon us, and despise us as they do, sure-lie.”

“They ought not to *despise* you, however much they might condemn your actions—most certainly they ought not,” Evelyn replied. “One there was once living upon earth (oh, do you not know the story?) One there was, the Son of the

very God we talk of; nay, God himself as well; and tho' of course without sin and incapable of sin, yet when they brought to Him a sinner He would not pronounce her judgment, but bade the man among her accusers who himself was guiltless, to cast the first stone at her. And when they heard that word, the crowd that had been so clamorous before, melted silently away; for in all that multitude there was not one who dared to undergo the test—not one who felt himself sufficiently free from sin himself to venture to avenge it in a fellow mortal. Esther! as it was in those days, so is it even in the present; for which of us is without sin—which of us therefore may despise the sinner."

"Then, tho' I bees what I be, you don't altogether despise me for it your own self, do you?" Esther at once demanded; as if in her straight forward way, she wished to put Evelyn's professions instantly to the test.

"Have I shown you that I do?" asked Evelyn, taking one of Esther's unwilling hands. "The world would say that appearances are against you; have I spoken, as if I despised you for it."

Esther stooped and kissed the hand which Evelyn had given her, with a deeper reverence than she had ever felt in her life before for any human being, but she did not immediately reply. Her mind was almost unconsciously to herself pre-occupied, in comparing Lily's words and even Lily's looks, and general bearing towards herself, with those of her present companion. Notwithstanding the humiliation of her position, nay, perhaps, in consequence of that bitter sense of degradation which sometimes prompts people to assert their doubtful dignity by overbearing conduct, Lily had always treated Esther with an open scorn, which, if the latter had accepted with a kind of proud humility, as a something of necessity attached to her condition, she had nevertheless keenly felt and resented deeply.

And now, on the contrary, in Evelyn's every word and look, she felt the soothing influence of a womanly and christian sympathy, which far from being revolted by a knowledge of her guilt, had put on an aspect of most sweet humility to lure her to repentance. Lily's words and

vaguely expressed opinions also, had tended directly or indirectly to harden her alike in her sin and her despair; while those of Evelyn went straight to every better feeling of her heart, melting its hardness into tender sorrow, and its lonely desperation into repentant love.

In a measure, Miss de Burge reminded her of Aileen; and if in the full grown woman, she could detect a shade of that deeper pity, which her deeper knowledge of sin, of necessity would bring, still she felt with a soft and earnest sentiment of grateful love, that there was as complete an absence of contempt, or harshness in her manner, as there had been in that of the young child, incapable of sin, and unconscious of its degradation.

"Your words are like to her'n," she said at length abruptly. "Not in course exactly, because she were a child, and knowed nothing wot-ever of what she talked of; while you are a woman, and can understand all as a woman had ought to be, and all as a guilty woman ain't. Not in course exactly, therefore, but very like for all that. Who learned you both, I

wonders, and how is it that, bein' so different in every thing else, in this you are so like each other."

"The church, no doubt," said Evelyn promptly; "the church which teaches, that as all are frail, no one should despise a fallen brother, and that as there is forgiveness within her pale for all, so no one need despair for himself or others. But you were speaking of some one in particular. Did you say a child?"

"Some other time may-happen, I'll speak to you about her," replied Esther, with some difficulty recalling her thoughts to the real object of her visit. "But not just now. It's of Lily we had ought to be a thinkin' at this minit. I promised her to bring you with me—be you willing for to wenture?"

"Am I not?" cried Evelyn joyfully. "Today, this very minute if you please. But there are others far nearer and dearer to her than I am; will you not allow me to bring one of them along with me?"

"Are you afeard to go alone?" asked Esther, a dark frown gathering on her brow.

"Afraid! No, indeed I am not! But there are some in yonder house who are pining to embrace her."

"Possible," replied Esther. "But still if you'll be guided by me, you'll come alone, for it will but vex and harden her, if any one she didn't ask for, come to gape at her in her misery."

"Probably you are right," said Evelyn; who felt there was much truth and observation of character in this remark. "After once I have seen her, it will be easier to decide upon what is to be done next. In God's name, therefore, let us set out at once."

"It's too far for to walk, Miss. But I seed a cab nigh hand the gate, as I were a comin' in, and on the chance of your wanting it, I telled the man to look out for a fare. So I daresay he's not far off, and if you'll walk slow to the gate-house, I'll have him up in a minute."

Evelyn readily agreed to this, but just as she reached the gate, Denis, who had been watching her from a distance, came running up, and guessing in a moment that she was going somewhere at Esther's suggestion, exclaimed—

"Ah, then, Miss Evelyn, sure it's not going off with that thief of a gipsy, you are?"

"I must, Denis! I must!" Evelyn impatiently answered. "Pray do not stop me. You do not know what mischief you may be doing."

"If you must go, you must, Miss, of coarse, then—any ways, I hope you won't object to my going too. It's just mad with me, the masther, would be, for letting you go alone, I am sartain."

"No!" replied Evelyn, after a moment's thought, during which it had occurred to her that Esther would probably feel aggrieved by any such suspicion of her motive, as the taking of a man servant along with her, might indicate. "This honest girl will be quite a sufficient protection for me. You can tell them at the house that I have gone to see a sick person, and if I cannot come back in time for dinner I will send them a line to say so."

"Excuse me, Miss," continued the faithful fellow following Evelyn, as she moved towards the cab. "But, indeed, and indeed it is quite unrespectable, that you should be seen at any

hour of the day or night in the company of such a dirty trollop as that."

And Denis jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Esther as he spoke, to indicate with more certainty to Evelyn, that she was the individual of whom he was expressing this pleasant opinion.

"And you must excuse *me*, Denis," Evelyn answered aloud, for she saw by the red spot on Esther's brow that she had guessed at least the import of his remonstrance; "if I consider myself competent to judge of the propriety of my own proceedings, and to allow neither you nor any one else to dictate to me on the subject."

Even as she was speaking, Evelyn's heart smote her for this apparent harshness to the old faithful servant of her friend. She felt, indeed, that he was more than justified by appearances in the advice which he had given, and nothing could have induced her to repulse him as she had done, but the dread lest his evident distrust should provoke Esther to depart without her, and thus the clue to Lily's residence be lost at

the very moment, when she stood most in need of the assistance of a friend.

Denis however was not to be repelled in his loving service, even by the first harsh words he had ever heard from the lips of Evelyn, but feeling instinctively that she was not to be moved just then by anything he could do or say, he only exclaimed in a despairing manner :

" If the masther were only here now to speake to you ! And there's Mr. Sutherland, too, what will I say to him, and Masther Frank when he comes up bye and bye to look afther his mother ! "

" Mr. Sutherland has long ceased to interfere with me ; his nephew never had any right to do so, and as for your own good master," continued Evelyn, trying to soften her refusal with a joke and a smile, " he, I know wuld be the very first to put me into a cab and to bid God speed me."

" Of coorse, Miss Evelyn, with me on the box, of coorse. Sure it's well known that with her own body man to look afther her, the proudest lady in the land may go in a cab and

be no worse thought of than if she'd been seen in the carriage of the Queen, (God bless her!)—but with me on the box of coarse, Miss Evelyn."

"If you can trust him, take him," said Esther shortly. "He can call a cab for you if you return, or take a message if you doen't."

This observation settled the business to the satisfaction of all concerned. Evelyn, for all her outward show of bravery, was by no means sorry for the sense of protection which the presence of Denis would afford her; and as for him, he was so fearful of any new objection on her part, that he rushed forward at once to open the cab door, and thus install himself beyond possibility of future contradiction as her "body man" for the expedition.

His young mistress entered without further parley; but just as he was about to close the door upon her, she stopped him and called upon Esther to get in.

"Not for worelds," replied the girl with an energy that startled Evelyn. "He's quite right," she continued, kneeling on the step so that her voice reached Evelyn's ear alone, and

speaking with rapid and passionate emotion; “he’s quite right, he is, and it ain’t neither right nor fitting that such as I should be seed side by side with such as you. No, Miss de Burghe, though I feels all the sweet tenderness that makes you so willin’ to bear with a crittur like me, yet not for worelds would I put such a disgrace upon you, as to let you be seed a drivin’ with me through the streets of Lonon.”

“Indeed, you judge yourself very harshly,” replied Evelyn, touched by the proud humility which imparted something almost of dignity to poor Esther’s manner. “And besides, how am I to find Lily if you won’t come with me?”

“Get up on the dickey, and I’ll shut the door,” said Esther, turning without any direct reply to Evelyn, and addressing herself to Denis, who was only too happy to obey the order, now that he felt sure “the mistress,” as he always called Evelyn, would not have to exhibit herself in Oxford Street with that “dirty drab” of a girril at her side. “Make the man drive to Temple Bar, and wait there till I comes,” the girl continued; “it won’t be werry long first, for

in five minutes I can pick up a buss as goes right on from this to the city."

"Tell him to drive slowly then," said Evelyn, who felt she had need of a little time to quiet her mind and arrange her thoughts before her approaching interview with Lily.

"Werry good!" cried Esther, shutting the door with a bang. "Slow's the word, and drive on, cabby."

## CHAPTER III.

ALL Evelyn's worst anticipations fell far short of the actual change which a few short weeks had wrought in Lily's health and personal appearance. The creature whom she remembered so bright and proud and careless—fitfully gay or fantastically sad, as the caprice of the moment prompted—the dainty, scornful, little damsel carrying refinement even to a fault, and affecting an eastern gorgeousness of dress and style, which, thanks to her uncle's generosity, she had always been able to accomplish, was now lying helpless and most forlorn upon the truckle bed of Judy. She was dressed just as she had been

when brought there two days before; while the long hair which used to show so sunny, and bright, and carefully arranged, now hung in damp and heavy masses over her cheek and pillow, betraying her own utter indifference to her personal appearance, and the total absence of all ideas on the subject in those who waited on her. She was sleeping as Evelyn entered; so that the latter had time to mark the ravages which sorrow and disease had made upon her form. Already she was wasted to a very shadow; her hands as they lay on the coverlet were almost transparent in their thinness; and save for the dark circle round the eye, and the hectic spot upon either cheek, telling of the fever that consumed her, her face could hardly have been more pale, if death instead of sleep had wrapt her in that deep repose. Relieved from her long watch, old Judy stumped off at once to the care of her nuts and apples, having first, however, muttered a fervent blessing on her sweet ladyship's head for not having been too proud to visit the sick and broken hearted, even in such a poor place as hers! Miss de Burghe, on her part,

prepared to wait as patiently as she could for the wakening of the sleeper, and Esther retreated to a distant corner, ready to spring up at a moment's notice to the assistance of her patient. A quarter of an hour passed heavily on, and Lily continued to look so fearfully ill, even after Evelyn had had time to accustom herself to her changed appearance, that feeling it would be unjustifiable to leave her longer without medical assistance, she wrote a few lines in pencil on a leaf which she tore from her pocket book, and addressed it to a surgeon whom she happened to know, and who resided at no great distance from old Judy's. This Esther promised to deliver without delay, and then Evelyn turned to resume her watch by Lily's bed side; but even as she did so, moved by a sudden impulse of love and pity, she stooped to kiss the poor, pale hand that was lying so listlessly outside the bed clothes. Light as the touch was, it awakened Lily, who made a movement as if to repel a blow, and then catching a glimpse of Evelyn, suddenly threw her arms round her neck and burst into tears.

This mood unfortunately lasted only for a minute; the next, as if moved by some new impulse, some bitter recollection, she flung herself out of Evelyn's embraces, and turning herself towards the wall, buried her face completely in the pillow.

"Lily! dear Lily!" cried Evelyn, trying to take one of the hands which Lily as obstinately refused to give her. "Will you not speak to me, darling? Do you not know that I love you dearly?"

But a sullen silence met her most affectionate entreaties, and after many vain endeavours to induce her to look up or answer, Evelyn burst into tears, exclaiming: "Oh, Lily! Lily! have you no pity for me! Can you not understand how miserable you make me?"

"Of course," retorted Lily, in the bitterness of her soul. "Of course I make you miserable, and everybody else as well! And you are come on purpose I suppose to taunt me with it?"

Evelyn did not think it necessary to suggest to the poor invalid, that it was only at her express request she had visited her at all, so she merely answered sadly—

"Indeed, indeed I did not, Lily. I only came to do what I could to comfort you in your misery."

"To triumph over me," continued Lily, as if she either had not heard, or had not heeded the words of Evelyn. "To triumph over me—to exult in your own superior wisdom—to pity me, and 'poor Lily' me, and hint forsooth how easily I might have escaped all gins and snares, man-traps, and spring-guns, if I had only had the wit to walk in the footsteps, and by the counsels of the virtuous Mistress Evelyn!"

"Oh, Lily! Lily! Why will you wilfully misjudge me by imputing to me such unjust and wicked thoughts?"

"You don't think them unjust," cried Lily, fiercely, sorrow and shame combining to make her even less than usual accessible to reason. "You don't think them unjust! You know in your heart, Evelyn, that you despise me—that for millions and millions of worlds you would not be in my place this day—that you think my conduct has been frightfully sinful—and that if I were up and about to-morrow, you would not

only scorn to come and see me, but you would pass over to the other side of the street on purpose to avoid me."

"And I know in my heart I would do no such thing," said Evelyn, warmly. "I have no right either to judge you, or despise you; and I would not treat you with contempt or harshness, if instead of being almost like my own child or sister, you were an indifferent person—a stranger, or any enemy. I do not say I think you have not done wrong, dear Lily," and Evelyn's voice softened into sadness at the pain she felt it her duty to inflict; "because with truth I cannot—but this I must and will say, that whatever may have been your faults, few persons have had more excuses for them than yourself."

"Thank you," said Lily, haughtily. "I do not want any of your excuses for my conduct, for I never did, and never will recognise your standard of right and wrong; and if my present position seems to bear you out in your reproaches, it is not my fault, but my misfortune, which has cast my lot with one, who had neither honor nor generosity enough to make it happy."

Evelyn's heart sank within her at the narrow pride which now as ever prompted Lily to seek by any means to justify her conduct, instead of nobly acknowledging that she had been in error. She actually sickened at the thought that to her was perforce allotted the painful duty of tearing aside the veil which self-love had dropt over the conscience of the erring girl, and of compelling her to look in all its naked reality upon the sin, which under some specious and soft disguise, she suffered so willingly to remain lurking there.

"Dear Lily, forgive me if I am mistaken," and Evelyn glanced once more at the left, third finger of Lily's little hand, to make sure there was no golden token on it to disarm her of her suspicions. "I may be mistaken, and I pray to God I am so, but it hardly seems to me from all I see or hear, that you are Frederick's wedded wife in the sight of Heaven."

The blow was struck—the word was said which both knew so well must come at last, and which the one had hardly dreaded so much to hear, as the other had done to speak. For a

moment, Lily covered her burning face with both her hands, but recovering herself by a violent effort, she replied in a voice of passionate and indignant pride:

“If you only mean to insinuate by that, that we did not so far degrade our love as to do anything which might imply suspicion of its truth, you have judged correctly. But in the sight of Heaven and earth, we vowed constancy to each other. Therefore in the sight of Heaven and earth, we are as much man and wife, as if the humbug of a religious ceremony or a legal contract had been employed to make us such; and my heart at least bears witness for me that if I had been so permitted, that vow would never have been loosed or broken.”

“Your heart, Lily! But did it never occur to you that two hearts were concerned in this bond of union; and that if you could answer for your own, there was another for which you could not do so with the same amount of certainty, and which, therefore, might very possibly prove false and fail you.”

“If you are only contending for marriage on

the grounds of expediency," replied Lily, with an air of what, under the circumstance, was an almost ridiculous assumption of moral superiority, "you must excuse me. I am not yet sufficiently a papist in my feeling, to adopt any particular line of conduct, merely because it is the most expedient."

Evelyn was hot enough by nature, and at any other time such a taunt would have roused her to a quick retort; but she could not feel angry with the fallen, faded creature who lay there, feebly endeavouring to fight off the reproaches of her own conscience, so she merely said:—

" You must know by this time, Lily, that mere expediency has never been a law for me. Nevertheless, I am quite persuaded that the right thing is often the most expedient also, and in the present case surely your own sense must tell you, that had you secured yourself a legal right to Frederick's affections, you would not have been in this sad position now!"

" Would I not! would I not!" cried Lily, her eyes flashing fire in her angry excitement.

"Evelyn, you little know me, if you think that any tie on earth would have kept me at his side, after that which has passed between us. And you little know him either," she added, after a pause from absolute exhaustion, the consequence of her own excitement. "As little as I did when I loved him first. Evelyn, he is a drunkard and a gambler—a man of the lowest habits and vilest associations, and had we been man and wife a thousand and a thousand times over, matters would still have come to this. Yes, passionate and cruel as he is, he would still have struck that blow, the memory of which is killing me by inches, and I would still have left him."

She put her hand to her head in a vague, involuntary manner as she spoke, and following the movement with her eyes, Evelyn perceived for the first time the bandage which bound her forehead, and guessed at once, both the wound that lay beneath, and the immediate cause of Lily's separation from her lover. It was not the moment however, when the compassion she really was feeling for her brother's victim could be judiciously expressed; and nerving herself to

the sterner task of convincing Lily of her own sin, she went on gently:

“ He may be all that you say he is, dear Lily. And being such, he might have struck, reviled, hated, and forsaken you, but still I must repeat what I said before. Had you been his wedded wife, in the midst of all this cruelty, he would have paid you still the tribute of his respect, for of that, at least, nothing but her own act and deed can deprive a woman.”

Even as Evelyn was speaking the scurrilous word which Frederick had addressed to her in his passion—that word which was stamped upon her heart, and burnt as it were in characters of fire upon her very brain, seemed to ring in her ears again, as terribly and contemptuously as when first she heard it. With a shriek like one whom sorrow and mortification had driven mad, Lily sat upright in her bed, and with clenched fist and flashing eyes, poured forth the torrent of her anger in words, so rapidly and passionately uttered, as to be almost incoherent.

“ Aye, that is right, Evelyn! Call me what he called me. Speak of me as he spoke of me.

Jeer, despise, and scoff at the poor outcast, whose place will be henceforth among the refuse of mankind. Speak it out! Speak it out! He didn't mince matters, and why should you? He called me openly all that you are insinuating with such politeness. Out with it at once, can't you? Why should I shrink from it? Don't I know well enough already, what I am, and where I am, and that the grave is the only home the friends who once pretended that they loved me, would now give me without a grudge! Only bear with me yet, a little longer. Something tells me it will not be for long—that a few more hours of this bad bitter earth, are all that are left me now, and you will then have nothing more to do, than to efface every memory of one whose existence has disgraced you. And do not fear, that your patience will be taxed too long! Death is coming quickly, or if it is not, I will compel it—for the only thing left to me, and such as me—too well, too well, I know it now—the only thing left us, is to die!"

Sorrowful and frightened as Evelyn was, she yet listened quietly to all this raving, for she

felt that to have offered explanations or remonstrance at such a moment would only have been to add fuel to the fire. But no sooner had Lily ceased to speak, more from positive inability to go on than from any lack of passionate emotion, than, in spite of all resistance, she folded her affectionately to her bosom, saying :

“ No, dearest Lily, do not say you wish to die or that any of us wish it for you. Believe me, there is much yet left for you to live for, and a work before you the noblest and most important that it is given to sinful mortals to accomplish—a work which, fallen though you may be, and alas ! I cannot, dare not say I think you are not—will yet lift you in God’s sight above the princes of this world, if they be not pure in conscience. Yes, and it will bring peace to your soul and joy to angels also, and compel, with a gentle violence, the Almighty Father of all, Himself to give you out of His abiding justice, the crown which He has promised alike to those who have never sinned, and to those who have repented that they did so.”

Alas ! there was no such response to her words

in Lily's heart as Evelyn had found in Esther's. For if Esther had been once without belief, it was only because nothing worthy of the name had ever been presented to her acceptance. The germ of faith which is set in the beginning in every human soul, had at least been left there uninjured, therefore at the very first hint from a better instructed mind, it had sprung so rapidly into life and action, that to a careless observer its growth might have seemed spontaneous. But with Lily it was quite otherwise. That germ had been nipped in the very bud beneath the cold teachings of scepticism, and the efforts which, all unconsciously to herself, her mind had made against this tyranny, had only resulted in a fantastical eternity, in which she had no real belief whatever. No sooner, therefore, had the innocence of her soul suffered shipwreck amid the stormy realities of her human passions, than she very naturally recurred with a sense of relief and almost of triumph to that fearful doctrine which had been whispered round her cradle, and which makes sin in reality the same as virtue, by denying alike the God who has forbidden, and

the terrible hereafter by which He has declared He will avenge it.

No wonder Evelyn's words produced quite a different effect in the different soil upon which they had fallen, or that shunning everything tending directly, or indirectly, to disturb the false security in which she was trying to plunge her conscience, instead of weeping tears of gratitude and love with Esther, Lily tried to escape all further argument by saying wearily and with an air of conviction which was by no means nevertheless the real language of her soul.

"That is all poetry and nonsense, Evelyn, as you have been told a thousand times before. It sounds very pretty when you say these things, and if I were as ignorant and narrow-minded as poor Esther, no doubt you would be able to metamorphose me into a 'fair penitent' in no time. But you forget that *I* had a very different sort of teaching once."

"Not from Frank," said Evelyn, gravely. "Whatever he may have thought himself, he never absolutely forced his own belief upon your acceptance."

"Not perhaps absolutely forced it on me. But you know, Evelyn, you know, that he was for ever declaiming on the subject, and raving against the bigotry and superstition of church-going, God-fearing people like yourself."

"But in those days you did not think exactly as he does on the subject."

"I thought I didn't quite. But now I believe I did, though I didn't know it at the time. The truth was, his doctrine was anything but a pleasant one to think of then, so I tried to weave a few moonbeams through its darkness; but I fancy I could never have seriously believed in anything, though I did not confess it to myself until—"

A sudden sense of shame made Lily first hesitate, and then break off entirely in the midst of her speech, and Evelyn seized upon her own words to answer.

"It was not a pleasant doctrine then, Lily, because then you were innocent, and to the innocent the thought that they shall one day look upon the living God is a glorious and a happy thought. But it is, if not a pleasant, at least an

endurable doctrine now, because (I must say it, though it wound you) you are innocent no longer, and with the consciousness of guilt upon you, you fear as our first parents did, lest when the voice of God shall call you, your soul shall have to stand naked and ashamed in its great sin before Him."

"Guilty! innocent! Innocent! guilty! How you harp upon those words," cried Lily, petulantly. "As if guilt or innocence were anything but a name, if there be really no future. And yet—and yet," she added, after a moment's pause, no longer passionately, but sadly and softly, and with her blue eyes swimming in tears and fixed mournfully on Evelyn; "and yet Frank who laughs at the idea of the one, always acts as if he believed in the other. Yes, Evelyn, and is cruel, and despises [those who have not, for—for (I did not mean to tell you Evelyn, but I cannot help it,) when I met him the other night he flung me from him in disgust. Though if only one half what he says about our being irresponsible and all that be true, there can be neither sin nor shame in anything I have done."

“And ought not this to convince you, Lily? Do you not see that if he was false to his own creed, it was only because that creed itself was false and could not uphold him in the hour of trial? And so his actions are always at variance with his axioms, for he avoids and prides himself on avoiding sin, even while denying all that is essential to its existence. I am sure he never flung you deliberately from him for that reason, and yet I can well believe, alas! I feel almost certain that it has lowered you in his estimation; and that where once he was so proud, now he feels himself humbled and ashamed, which to a man of his disposition must needs be a terrible sensation.”

“And that is his justice!” pouted Lily. “I am what he made me, and he flung me off.”

“His justice perhaps—and the world’s for certain; but happily for you and for us all, dear Lily, it is not that of God, which so long as it overtakes us in this world, is ever tempered with love and mercy! He does not fling you off as yet—He, on the contrary, is waiting for you still—is calling upon you to come,—and is ready

to receive you as a most loving father the moment you cast yourself into His arms, and humbly acknowledge that you have sinned against Him."

" You talk as if you were absolutely in His presence," murmured Lily, looking round her with something like an involuntary shudder.

" And are we not in His presence?" Evelyn earnestly replied, " do we not live and move, and have our being in Him? Nay, is He not at this very moment speaking from my heart to yours, and stirring up your very soul by the consciousness of that awful and invisible presence, which fills the whole universe with its majesty, and yet wraps itself round each living soul, as if it existed for that soul alone. Oh, Lily, can you not by searching find out God? Or is it not rather, as it seems to me, that instead of requiring you to seek out Him, He Himself is coming at this moment in search of you?"

" Evelyn, be silent, you frighten me! you will drive me mad," shrieked Lily; " He here, whom I have denied so often! He here, whom I have so often scoffed at. He here! He here! Oh, Evelyn, if He is really here, or if indeed He exists

at all, what is to become of me in this world, or *that other?*"

Lily hid her face in her hands; and frightened by her vehemence, Evelyn did not dare to break the silence, but after a few minutes of almost intolerable suspense, the unhappy girl once more uncovered her face, from which even the hectic induced by fever had completely faded, leaving nothing behind but ashy paleness, and a dark, deep circle beneath either eye, while the eye itself was instinct with fear as she fixed it on that of Evelyn.

"Cruel, cruel," she muttered between her whitened lips, "oh, Evelyn, you have been very cruel; I was calm enough before, at least it seems like calmness now, and you have plunged me again into an ocean of doubt, and fear, and horrible forebodings. You have been very cruel, and yet—and yet—"

"And yet what, dearest?" asked Evelyn, for Lily had paused again, while with her eyes still fixed upon her, she seemed struggling to give utterance to some thought which choked her.

"Frank's doctrine is so dreadful," she gasped

out at length. “ To cease to be, to be resolved into nothing, all our life and youth, and gladness, our very sorrows to go out of us; all our hopes, and fears, and fancies, and aspirations to be hushed for ever; to die—to exist no more in mind or body—thought and feeling quenched for ever; that is what Frank would call it. But is it not very dreadful, Evelyn?”

“ Dreadful, indeed,” repeated Evelyn, “ but happily not true—”

“ Aye, there it is!” cried Lily, her voice rising into tones of shrill despair, “ there it is, Evelyn; only see what a fate is mine! what a horrible choice alone is left me, annihilation or eternal misery. One or the other—one or the other!” she continued wildly; “ for if there be a God, then have I sinned against him fearfully, and so there is no hope for me.”

“ There is hope for all,” Evelyn was beginning, when the door opened and the physician whom she had sent for was ushered in by Esther.

Lily was a stranger to him, and Evelyn did not think it necessary to enlighten him entirely on the subject, though she did give him to un-

derstand that his patient had not been always the inhabitant of the poor abode in which he found her, and that sorrow as much as real illness was the incubus that seemed bowing her to the grave.

Dr. E—— was, however, fortunately, quick witted, and a very few questions judiciously put, having given him just such an insight into the real nature of the case as he deemed necessary in his medical capacity, he proceeded at once to the examination of the invalid. Sitting down beside her, he spoke for a few minutes in a kind and soothing manner to her, and then there was silence, while with a keen eye he seemed to search out every symptom that could guide him in his judgment.

Evelyn thought she could almost hear the beating of her own heart, as she watched the looks of the man who was about to decide upon Lily's fate; but the poor child herself lay still as death.

Shame at finding herself in the presence of a stranger at such a moment and in such a manner had caused her to close her eyes. She was exhausted beside by the violence of her emotions,

while a fear of his possible decision made her breath come quick and short. In a few minutes she would know whether she was to live or die. It was a strange and almost inconceivable though, to one so young, and till the last few woeful days so full of life.

Dr. E. felt her pulse, felt it again and again, and at last dropped the delicate wrist he held, in a way that made Evelyn shudder, it seemed so hopeless! She did not dare to ask a single question, she would not even look at him, she so dreaded the import of the glance that would be given in return; but after another moment of that fearful silence Lily opened her eyes again, and asked him with a look of beseeching earnestness that moved him deeply:

“Do you think that I am dying, sir?”

God knows how much of mild entreaty she threw into both look and words, or how it almost seemed as if in asking Dr. E. this question, she was only asking humbly and simply, (confiding, like a little child as in truth she almost was, entirely in his power to save her,) that he would not let her die, but that for this once at least, he

would preserve her from the fate she dreaded now, wildly as in her passionate ravings she had before invoked it. And he, to whom this touching appeal was made, knew all too well that it was made in vain; knew that the fiat had gone forth, and that life, the life which, even in its present phase of degradation, she coveted, because it was the only life she knew of, was ebbing rapidly away, and that a few brief seconds were all that his utmost skill could add to its numbered hours.

But he had not the heart to say so, to look into those beseeching eyes and to answer those wistful glances in the stern language of the prophet, "Set thy house in order, for presently thou diest." In spite of himself, however, the sentence was in his look and manner as he hesitatingly answered :

"I hope not, my dear young lady; while there is life there is always hope; but still it is right to be prepared for everything. And happily we are all in the hands of a loving God, who is always willing to have mercy on his creatures. In the meantime you will keep very

quiet, and take what nourishment you can; and I am going to write for a cordial, which I hope will strengthen and relieve you from some of your uncomfortable feelings."

And as if glad to have got over this painful part of his duty, Dr. E. rose at once, beckoned Evelyn to the window, and continued in a voice which Lily could not hear:

"I will have it made up at the next chemist's and take the girl with me to bring it back. She seems intelligent and willing. You will give the mixture to your patient as often as you think proper; in fact, whenever she seems sinking."

The emphasis which he laid upon the last fatal word told all to Evelyn, and with a pale face and quivering lip she faltered forth:

"Then there is nothing to be done?"

"Nothing," he replied; and oh! the anguish of that word to the poor trembling, anxious heart that is longing still to be told of hope, even though perfectly conscious that all legitimate cause for hope is vanished. "There must always have been latent heart disease," he continued, "which some great mental agony has

so rapidly developed, that it is now beyond the power of medicine to remove, and she is dying at this very instant. A few hours more or less there may be, but in any case she is going rapidly. Let her have the cordial and a little wine whenever you can prevail upon her to take it; it will prolong life though it cannot save it. I am truly sorry that I can do no more—such a fair young creature too, so absolutely almost a child! —it is in truth a pity!"

He cast a last, long lingering look on Lily as he spoke, and then went forth, leaving all the higher and harder duties of the hour to devolve upon poor Evelyn. The latter had heard nothing indeed, but what she most certainly expected to be told, and yet the words of Dr. E. had almost stunned her. Lily dying, and in such a state—with unrepented sin upon her soul, and despair and infidelity contending for its possession.

How would she bear the sentence that had been pronounced against her? She, who had just declared that she had nothing to hope and all to fear from that eternity, which was fast closing

round her. And yet she must be told it! Dr. E. had said that a few short hours would terminate her existence, and already there was a grey shadow settling upon her young face which told too plainly of the valley of the shadow of death into which she was fast descending. Yes, certainly she must be told; but how?

Evelyn could have wrung her hands in her sorrow and perplexity, as she asked herself the question, but happily for her it was soon solved by Lily. Ever since Dr. E. had turned so abruptly from her to speak to Evelyn, she had lain quite still. Her eyes were closed, and it might almost have seemed as though she were again asleep, if a heavy tear or two stealing through the long silken lashes that lay upon her cheek, had not told, how she was tasting all the sorrow and bitterness of death in her secret soul already! Now, however, she opened them, and fixing them on those of Evelyn, said in a voice of settled and most sad conviction:

“Evelyn, he thinks that I am dying! Do not deny it. I saw it in his face.”

Evelyn did not deny it, for she felt she ought

not; but her tears fell fast upon the pillow of the dying girl and she hung over her with such a look of longing, as if she could have fought with death itself for her possession. Perhaps the poor child herself, in the weakness of her human nature, had almost hoped to hear that very word of denial, which yet she had forbidden Evelyn to utter; for there was a deeper sadness still in the cadence of her voice as she went on a little wildly,

“I am afraid to die, Evelyn! All seems so dark and cold, or something worse, before me.”

“Oh, Lily, if you would but have pity upon yourself,” Evelyn could not forbear sighing. “There need be nothing dark or cold, or worse, before you.”

“To go down into the dark grave,” moaned Lily, as if she had not heard. “Down into the dark grave, and nothing else—and nothing more.”

“To go down into the dark grave!” Evelyn repeated. “But in the body only, and the soul to rise bright, beautiful, and glorious—a creature conscious of eternal life—springing upwards to meet its destinies, and casting doubt, and fear,

and pain aside, with that fleshly covering which so long had veiled its greatness from itself."

Lily did not answer; but her features relaxed in their rigid tension, and her eyes for a moment filled with light, as if the soul were reviving in its future prospects. Evelyn marked the change and it gave her courage to add, "Lily! dear Lily! I feel so powerless to convince! But think, dearest, think, that after all to err on the side of faith were the lesser evil of the two; for in the one case it will be neither loss nor crime to have believed too much, while in the other, it will be a wrong to your immortal soul, which an eternity of tears will be insufficient to wash out."

Evelyn ceased to speak, and yet Lily still was silent. In truth there was a fearful struggle going on within her, not only between doubting and believing, but also between the pride that would not allow her to acknowledge herself mistaken; and fear and horror of that silent grave, which otherwise she must accept of as her only portion. Against that dread decree her whole

soul was up in arms, proclaiming itself immortal now, as vehemently as in its hour of folly it had attempted its own suicide, by denying to its nature any life higher than that which it shared in common with the body. Unhappily, faith had been so deadened in her by a long habit of scoffing and incredulity, that it now seemed as hard to believe as it was painful to deny,—as impossible to confide entirely in the hopes of eternity, as to yield herself wholly to the annihilation of time. She was silent, therefore, and once more in tremulous accents Evelyn took up the theme.

“I know, dear Lily, how hard it is to admit that we have been deceived; and yet, believe me, the real strength of the soul consists in acknowledging its own weakness, its real greatness in confessing to its own littleness—its only real nobility of pride in daring before all the world to declare that it has been mistaken. And this strength and greatness, and noble pride may be all your own, dear Lily, if you choose it; and with it, and by it, you may atone, and more than atone for all that has been weak and sinful in the past. God, I doubt not, is pleading at this

moment with you against yourself for admittance into your heart. There is time still, but yet a little longer, and time for you will be no more! Oh, will you not listen to His voice who calls you? Will you not entrust your future prospects to safer guidance than your own? Will you not let me send for one who in reconciling you to God, and to your conscience, will give you help I cannot give—and strength and consolation, such as only the Catholic Church can offer to the dying, in the hour of their utmost need?"

Something in Lily's look caused Evelyn to rise, half hoping she might be permitted to do as she had proposed; but the other caught her hand and drawing her feebly towards the pillow, whispered:

"Not yet, Evelyn, not yet. I must first see Frank. I must first put it to his own soul what he thinks is to become of mine; or whether indeed I have a soul, or whether I am a mere machine, formed out of dust and ashes, and destined only to the dust again."

"But surely you will not abide solely by his

reply," said Evelyn, trembling at the bare idea of his being the casting vote, to decide upon the destinies of this immortal soul.

"I will abide by the answer my own soul makes to his," replied Lily, with a higher kind of firmness than Evelyn had ever known her to display before. "I will abide by that answer, whatever it may be. But send for him at once, and do not speak to me any more just now, for I am faint and weary, and feel as if this life within me, whatever it is, were ebbing rapidly away."

She did indeed look terribly exhausted, but fortunately Esther returned at the very moment with the medicine which Dr. E. had prescribed, and after giving her a little and seeing that it revived her, Evelyn wrote a few lines in pencil, and went herself to the door to deliver them to Denis

She found him exactly on the spot where she had stationed him some hours before, and having desired him to take a cab and drive first to the villa to look for Frank, and afterwards to Father Wilfrid, for whom she gave him another

note, she returned to her post by Lily's bedside. The latter had already fallen into a quiet slumber, and Evelyn knelt down to pray beside her. She was too much absorbed in her own anxious thoughts to notice that retiring into a distant corner, Esther had done the same, taking from her the attitude of prayer, if she knew not as yet how to shape her petitions into words.

And so they waited and prayed together, (for surely there was prayer in the hearts of both,) so they waited and prayed together, those two young women, so different in all things else, in feeling, knowledge and position—one, the daughter of wealth, education, and refinement—the other, the child, as it were, of the streets she dwelt in, and rocked in their brutality from her very cradle; her only education in the ways of sin, her only joys drawn from its muddy waters. So they waited and prayed together, as far apart in all things else as the north pole from the south, but yet drawn to each other and united by that faith in a God creator, all wise, all powerful, and

all holy, which alone can console us for the unequal gifts of fortune here, by teaching us to look for a very different distribution of them in the kingdom which is to come of His eternal justice.

## CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Frank Montgomerie entered the old Irish woman's abode an hour afterwards, Lily was still asleep. He had therefore ample time to contemplate the ravages that disease and sorrow had made upon that fair face, which when last he looked upon it, was still in the first tender flush of its rose like youth and freshness.

Time also he had to investigate more fully than he otherwise could have done the squalid poverty of the dwelling, in which his sister had found a refuge; and as his eye glanced from the heterogeneous articles which constituted the furniture of the room, to the attendant Esther, whose position

in life was not easily to be mistaken, he wrung Evelyn's hand with a groan which all his pride and manhood were insufficient to enable him to repress.

The sound of his voice woke Lily, and as he approached her bedside she fixed her eyes earnestly upon him; those blue eyes once so bright and joyous in their child-like glee, now darkening and deepening with a meaning that made him shudder, though he guessed not as yet the thought it sprung from.

"Brother," she said at once, without seeming to notice the hand he held out to her, and in a voice, which, had he not seen that her lips were moving, he never would have recognised as hers, so strangely did its accents differ from the fresh and joyous tones he had once been used to in his sister. "Brother, I have sent for you to know, (you are truth itself, and will not, I am sure deceive me), I have sent for you to ask, if you think there is, or if at least you are quite certain, that there might not be, although you do not know it, another world as well as this one?"

"Oh, Lily, Lily," cried her brother sadly,

"what a question, and where is the use of discussing it at such a moment?"

"And what other question can interest me now? or what other moment is left me to discuss it?" asked Lily hoarsely. "Brother, brother, it is no longer to me a matter of theory but of fact. I am going from this world, that is certain; is it strange that I should ask you whither? Is it strange," she continued, struggling with her feelings, and her want of power adequately to express them, "is it strange that I should want to know whether this thinking, living spirit within my bosom, is passing on to another world, a world of spirits like itself, or whether it is subject to the same dread sentence as the body, and destined like it to the annihilation of the grave?"

It were vain to try and tell of the world of bitterness and anguish that filled the breast of Frank, as his young sister, his almost child, thus questioned him of her eternal doom; and then with eyes that seemed greedy even of a ray of hope, and fixed earnestly upon his, remained waiting (so it might almost be deemed) the fiat of the

awful future from his lips. Not to save his life could he have spoken at that moment; and finding he continued silent, she went on, the tone of preternatural calmness in which she had commenced, giving way to a something of passionate impulse, like the cry of a frightened child.

"I cling to life, Frank! The nearer I approach to death, the more I cling to life! Not for its pleasures; they are gone from me for ever,—but for the very sake of life itself. And I cannot consent to die! I never can die willingly, if to die means as you used to think it did, to be no more—to think, to feel, to rejoice, to grieve, no more. I shouldn't mind it so much, I believe, if it were only as Evelyn says, the passing from one life to another, and that there were hopes in that other for me. This one is used up for me. But oh, Frank, I do so cling to the fact of some kind or other of life, that now it almost seems, as if it would be better to exist in eternal torment, than not to exist at all!"

And what could Frank say to this? Alas! what could he say? How answer this passionate appeal, this despairing cry from the soul that

*would* not die! In his own heart and conscience he believed his theory still—believed, that with her last breath she would have ceased to be, as entirely as if she never had been! But how could he say so to that pale, expectant creature, shrinking and shuddering at the very thought. No! he could not say it to her! He could not say it at that moment, even to himself. So he did instead, what at another time he would have scorned himself for doing, he stooped to express a doubt he felt not, and instead of the old positive assertion in the negative, in hesitating accents answered: “Sister, I cannot say for certain—but if there is another world, pray that you may be enlightened to believe it.”

Suddenly he paused, for a cry of despair broke from the pale lips of Lily, and she gasped out: “Brother, I cannot pray, you never taught me how.” And then turning her face to the wall, the dying girl spoke no more, and only the quick convulsive sobs that shook her slender frame, told that she was living still.

A pause ensued—broken only by the sound of that low weeping—an awful pause—full of

worlds of thought to all who stood beside that fearful death-bed, and then a voice not low—but yet not loud—a voice thrilling in faith and melting in the sweetness of an untold love, took up the silence, and the “Miserere mei Domine” of the fiftieth psalm broke upon that still death chamber, as if a spirit of hope and mercy had suddenly descended to it. And at each new verse of that most solemn pleading, the cry of the guilty soul to God, where fear is swallowed up in love, and consciousness of abounding sin is balanced by hope in mercy as abounding—at each new verse, as it fell from the lips of Evelyn, peace seemed to enter into Lily’s bosom,—such peace as she had never in her most joyous moments known before. Such peace as the world and worldlings cannot give, because they have it not. Such peace as the light of faith alone has power to impart to the soul, sinking into the otherwise impenetrable mystery of the grave. Such peace, to say all in a single word, as Jesus gave to His disciples, as the last best boon that a God made man could confer upon His creatures.

And in that hour, for the first time in her young life, Lily had a living, active faith within her—faith, although she could not have defined its measure or degree—faith, although unacknowledged, and almost perhaps unconsciously to herself; but yet a faith which brought to her lips at once that cry of prayer, which is the soul's tacit confession, not only to a God Creator, but also to a Providence watching over it—to an intelligence above it, and beyond it, ordering its destinies, and ruling all its actions—to a superior Power from whence it comes, and to whom it goes—or in the simply sublime language of the catechism—‘to a God, who is its first beginning, and its last end.’ Yes! long ere the last words of the psalm which of course was said in English had died away, Lily’s eyes were closed, and her hands were clasped, and her whole soul was bowed down in prayer; and, Evelyn, who watched her with a mother’s love, could have uttered a cry of joy over the soul that she felt instinctively was saved. Neither Frank nor Esther, however, knew of this happy transformation, for both had

already left the room, moved, as it afterwards appeared by a similar impulse, though their method of following it out was somewhat different. Esther on her part, went no further than the apple-stall belonging to old Judy, to whom she said abruptly—"The gal as you took in the other night is a dyin, in despair too, for if ever I seed despair on a human crittur's face (and I've seed it on more nor one ere this) I seed it on hers jist now. Is there any one you know of as could give her comfort, think ye?"

"Ough, then, and is it a haythen you are to be askin?" retorted Judy, with a look of intense disgust at the ignorance of the speaker. "Why it's his riverence that could, to be sure, for the biggest sinner that ever was shot from the galleys needn't die unaisy if he's got God's own priest to help him to make up his sowl for Heaven. Yerra! why wouldn't they do as much for that poor darlint, that I'll go bail for, has been led asthray by one as knew betther what he was about nor she did. My heavy curse on the black villyan, who ever he is, for the sin and the sorrow he's brought upon her."

"Then go for him at once, will you?" said Esther; "I don't know where he lives, and if we wait much longer he'll come too late for she."

"To be sure I will! and wid a heart and a half besides," cried the good old woman. "Musha, then, and is it dyin' you say she is, and she so young and purthy, too. Lord save us! But what's to become of the oringes while I am afther his riverance?" she added, a sudden misgiving as to their possible fate during her absence, throwing a damp over the real pleasure she felt in an act of charity towards a fellow-creature.

"Never you fret for that," said Esther, quietly. "I'll mind the stall till you comes back agin."

"Here, then, sit you down on this cutty stool, my girril, and remember the oringes is three ha'pence a piece, and the apples a pinny (sweet Jasus forgive me)," she added, crossing herself in a sudden fit of compunction, "for thinkin' of the goods of this worreld when a christian's sowl is in danger! And don't be lettin' the boys come too near yez," she could not, however, resist

adding the next minute. “ They are the very thieves of the worreld in regard to oringes, they are, and if I didn’t give some of ’em a good thumpin’ every day for the sake of the example, I’d been ruined entirely long ago. And now, my jewel, I’m off in airnest, so throw a shoe afther me for luck-sake, and say God speed ye.”

And off she set accordingly; but we cannot undertake to follow her in her expedition, being under the necessity of returning to Frank, who had left the room at the same time as Esther, and with the same intention of bringing a clergyman to his dying sister. It was not that he had any more faith in the existence of a God, or the immortality of the soul than he had entertained before. His only idea was to cheat poor Lily into such a frame of mind, as might best enable her to meet her coming fate with composure; and this he thought would be most easily effected by those very religious acts, which, in his secret soul, he still designated as the “ mummeries of superstition.”

He had no time to ask himself just then, why it is that the human soul has this craving for

immortality, if immortality be a condition inconsistent with its nature. All he thought or cared for at the moment, was, that true or false, his sister should derive comfort from the notion; and flinging himself into a cab, he bade the man drive to Father Wilfrid's, a friend of Evelyn's, and the only priest whom he knew even by name, in London. Meeting, however, with Denis on the way, and learning from him that the Father had set out on his rounds already, he drove instead, to a house in Burlington Street, where his housekeeper thought her master was most likely to be found. But here again he was too late, and after a succession of useless visits to every house likely or unlikely, that Denis could think of, there was nothing for it but to drive once more to Father Wilfrid's, and wait there patiently until he returned.

Fortunately he was actually rapping at the door as the cab drove up, and he no sooner understood that a dying person required his assistance, than he followed Frank to the cab, and they drove off together.

Few words were exchanged between them on the route. After explaining that it was his sister he was taking the rev. father to see, and that she was dying, Frank merely added: "You know that I do not believe as you do, and neither did my sister. But she has not mind enough to meet death calmly, without some of those religious ceremonies by which men have tried to soften the bitterness of the hour. Miss de Burghe is already with her, and you have my full leave to make her what you please between you, so only that you make her happy."

Having thus, as he hoped, exonerated himself from all charge of superstition for his share in the business, Frank threw himself back in the carriage and relapsed into gloomy silence. He knew he was asking an unusual favor of Father Wilfrid, in thus bringing him to the bedside of one who had expressed no wish for his presence, and who very possibly might uncourteously repel it; but for all that, he could not bring himself to make the request with any greater show of courtesy or kindness.

"All clergymen were hypocrites;" that was

his favorite maxim. "They were hypocrites as a body, though not perhaps as individuals ;" and with such a feeling in his mind, and so deeply rooted there, as to have become a second nature to him, Frank, whatever might be his personal liking for a priest, never could thoroughly esteem, still less could give him full and entire credit for the good actions he performed.

No wonder, therefore, that as he sat by Father Wilfrid now, there was a dull rage in his heart, at having been compelled, not only to turn to one of the hated class for help, in the hour of his utmost need, but to give the lie to all his own convictions, by invoking his presence at the death-bed of his sister.

He was too much a gentleman, however, to give open expression to such feelings, albeit, too much of a human being to be able entirely to conceal them. Fortunately Father Wilfrid was sufficiently aware of his character and opinions already, to be able thoroughly to comprehend his present annoyance. Instead then of forcing his conversation upon him, he occupied himself with a book, till they arrived at their destination.

A ghastly paleness overspread Frank's face, and his breath came quick and short, as he stood once more on the steps of the orange-woman's abode.

What of Lily now? or in what mood of mind was he about to find her? Would she look upon him again with that look of unutterable woe? would she greet him again with that cry of despair? would she address him again in those words, which had cut him to the heart already, by the reproach they had tacitly conveyed? would she put aside the priest, whom against his own convictions he had brought unwillingly to her bed side? would she reject his offered ministry? would she refuse to be either persuaded or consoled? would she say again as she had said before, 'brother, you never taught me how to pray?' Or, on the other hand, would the struggle have ceased already? would the poor child have battled her last in the strong arms of death? would the light of the eye be quenched, and the cry of the lip be hushed for ever? and Lily from her bed of straw have lost all power to upbraid him with the doubt that had deepened and darkened the agony of her death hour?

Alas! more than one hour had elapsed since he had left her, and he shuddered to think upon all that might have happened in that short time, and upon the difference that it might have set between the Lily he had left and the Lily he was about to find.

And a change indeed he found when at last he took courage to enter her sick chamber, but not such a change as he had dreamed of; a difference—but not the difference he had shrunk from—it was only the change from scepticism to faith, from despair to hope, from fear to love. It was only the difference between a creature shrieking and struggling in the gripe of death, and one sinking amid peaceful prayers to repose upon its bosom.

He had left her with the sweat of fear upon her brow, and its cry upon her lips, with eyes that were gleaming in wild despair, and hands that wrung each other in their anguish, as she saw the world and its brightness passing from her, and the cold, dark grave and its nothingness approaching. He found her calm, peaceful,

and confiding; the murmur of prayer upon her lips, its attitude in her folded hands, its spirit in her eyes, which bright, hopeful, and full of love, were now raised to that heaven she trusted soon to enter, and now bent in tearful supplication on the crucifix she held as an acknowledgment, that He whom it represented was indeed her Saviour. A priest, for such Frank guessed him at once to be, was praying by her bed side, and Evelyn knelt beside him, her arm supporting the dying girl, and her face radiant with the well grounded hope, that Lily was but departing earth to enter heaven.

Esther was on her knees in a distant corner, awe and perplexity on her face; while squatted on the floor beside her, old Judy prayed aloud, with all the fervour and *abandon* of her nation. The last prayer for the departing soul was said, and then the officiating priest arose and drew a little on one side, for he had caught a glimpse of Frank as he entered, and guessed at once his relationship to his penitent. Lily once more raised the crucifix to her lips, and then

glanced eagerly round the room. Evidently she was looking for her brother, so he came at once and stood beside her.

She knew him directly, and putting out one feeble hand, drew his silently to her lips and kissed it. It had always been one of her favourite methods of endearment, and Frank's heart swelled within him at receiving such a token at such a moment.

“Sister, are you happy now?”

Hardly had he voice to ask the question, but he was answered by a smile so bright as almost to startle him; and, “Brother I believe!” was the only further explanation the dying girl had power to give him. Yet a moment longer, and those eyes still looked into his, not wistfully or fearfully now, but filled with such a bright intelligence and joy that it almost seemed as if the soul, in that last moment of its earthly career, were asserting its own existence—making its final protest against the narrow-minded, low conception that would confound the material with the spiritual portion of our being, and bow down the immortal to a level with the mortal—

triumphing, so to speak, over the frail body by which it had been so long obscured, and witnessing for itself, that it was at the zenith of its power at the very moment when the earthly vessel which had contained it, was about to be shattered into atoms beneath the rushing tread of death! All this, and even more than this, there might have been in that one last look which Lily cast upon her brother! And then all at once the brightness faded away—the look of preternatural intelligence vanished into vacancy—the pulses stopped—the living current ceased to flow—death laid his heavy hand on life, and all was stilled beneath it. The strength of that mute appeal had exhausted all her power, and so far as this world was concerned, Lily had ceased to be.

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What happened in the next half-hour, Frank never could rightly tell, for his eyes during all that time were fixed upon his dead sister, and his mind still occupied in questioning of her past and present state. He was conscious indeed that others knelt around the bed of death, and

prayed. He was conscious also, of a kind of drowsy wonder, at the way in which the dead in all those prayers was spoken of as if she had been living still—nay he was conscious even of a kind of comfort in the discovery, that others did not believe her to be so utterly gone out from him into darkness and annihilation as he considered her himself. In a vague, dreamy, sort of way he was conscious of all this; but it was only as an under current running for the moment unheeded through his mind. Lily before him, Lily dead, absorbed all his more active thoughts and feelings, and as he gazed upon that marble face his mind was tossed between the extremest points of scepticism and faith. In fact, he found it almost as difficult to believe just then, that the bright spirit which had once given animation to those features was quenched for ever, as to suppose, that it had only sought another and more congenial sphere for the exercise of its powers. And truly the face he gazed upon was well calculated not only to suggest, but to enforce the latter supposition; for death, as it so often happens, had more than restored to Lily the

beauty of which she had been robbed by illness. The look of rapture which she had cast upon him in dying, yet lingered upon her lovely features, and there was a repose in her very attitude, the result of perfect freedom from mental or bodily distress at the moment of her decease, that almost tempted Frank to say in his own heart: "She is not dead, but sleeping."

A light touch on his shoulder roused him from his reverie, and he looked up. Both the rev. gentlemen had departed, and he and Evelyn were alone in the death chamber.

" You must go home, Frank. Indeed you must," the latter ventured to observe. " Do not look so sadly upon that dear one. Believe me, she is happier far as she is, than if she had been left to linger longer in this sad, cold world of ours."

Evelyn tried to speak cheerfully, but she had held up bravely for many hours, and now the reaction would come in spite of every effort to prevent it, and she burst into tears.

" Evelyn, Evelyn," cried Frank as he warmly wrung her hand. " All this has been too much

for you. It should have been my task, not yours, and now you are suffering for your heroic charity."

"Oh, do not call it heroic, Frank, and do not say I suffer; for, believe me, these tears are not all of sadness. How could they be, indeed, knowing that she died in hope, and not despair, and that we may think of her now as a saint in heaven, while on earth—"

Evelyn broke off suddenly, for she would not wound a brother's ear, by even alluding to what the earthly career of that young, dishonoured life too possibly might have been; but the same idea had occurred to him already.

"While here," he said bitterly and sadly; "Yes, yes. It's better as it is. But now, at least, dear Evelyn, go home, and I will see to all that is needful to be done here."

"No," said Evelyn gravely. "I will not leave this dear child any more, until I see her in her grave. But your first duty now is to console your mother, Frank. She must know her loss, and the sooner the better, because Dr. Spencer said, that anything would be preferable

to the uncertainty which has unhinged her mind already, and that even the shock of bad news, (so only that it was certain also,) might be of service. But that it should be useful, Frank, it must be from your lips only that it comes, for no one else will have the same power to console her."

Frank felt there was much truth in this, and resolving either to return himself, after he had broken the news of Lily's death to his mother, or to send Dr. Spencer in his stead, he took one last look at the fair, dead form which had been his sister, and reluctantly departed.

Thoughts as to how he might communicate the sad intelligence most easily to his mother, occupied him fully during his walk back; but as he approached "the Ferns," there was a bustle and stir about the house, that struck him as being unusual. Lights were gleaming from one or two of the upper rooms, where they were not usually to be seen at that early hour. A window was shut down suddenly, as if some one had been watching his approach, and a servant met him at the door, to say in a subdued

and almost frightened whisper, "that Mr. Sutherland wished to see him in his study." In obedience to this summons, Frank walked through the hall, with a confused presentiment of further evil in his mind, although he had not the slightest idea as to its real nature, until Mr. Sutherland met him at the study door, and taking both his hands with a very unusual show of feeling, for one so naturally forbidding and austere, said hurriedly :—

"Your mother, my dear fellow! My poor sister!" Then all at once, the truth burst upon Frank's mind, and he exclaimed: "She is dead then, as well as Lily!"

And so indeed it was. Frank had been summoned away so suddenly from her presence in the afternoon, that her suspicions were probably excited as to the cause of his disappearance, although she said nothing to any one on the subject. Nor had those who were in charge of her, observed any additional trace of anxiety in her manner. Nevertheless, anxiety, and very keen anxiety she must have felt; and like many persons of unsound intellect, she resorted to stratagem

for obtaining the information, which she probably fancied would be refused to her inquiries. Seating herself at the window, she waited there until Dr. Spencer's arrival from Southampton, and then sending her maid on some pretext or other to the kitchen, she crept quietly up-stairs, and succeeded in gaining, unobserved, the landing place outside the doctor's room. Unfortunately, Denis had forgotten to close the door, in his eagerness to give his master an account of the pitiable state in which Evelyn had found Lily; and it is hard to say how much of that sad tale the poor listener outside heard or understood. Her mother's heart had probably sharpened alike her hearing and her power of comprehension. Scarcely had he ceased to speak, ere a groan and a heavy fall warned him of the presence of some one on the threshold. She was taken up insensible; but fit followed fit so rapidly that nature sank beneath the reiterated shocks, and she died at last without any complete return to consciousness, though the repeated and inarticulate murmur of the name of 'Lily' sufficiently showed, how even in the very agony and pangs of

death her thoughts were still fixed upon her dishonoured child. All this, poor Frank was now compelled to hear, partly from Mr. Sutherland's lips, and partly from the doctor's; but when in his turn, he told of Lily's fate and Evelyn's devotion, Dr. Spencer eagerly offered to go to the assistance of the latter, and Frank as eagerly accepted of the offer. The double blow, in fact, had stunned him so completely, that he felt almost incapable of further effort; and he was possessed, besides, by an eager longing to go to Mrs. Montgomerie's chamber, and to look once more upon all that remained to him of his much loved mother.

Strong as this desire was, however, he would not indulge it, until he had seen Evelyn's maid, (provided with all that her mistress could want for the night,) depart under the escort of the doctor; but this duty being fulfilled, he bade Mr. Sutherland good night, and proceeded to his room. That of his mother was in the same corridor, and after hesitating a moment on the threshold, he went in. Save the candle which he carried in his hand, and which only served to make the dark-

ness more palpable to the senses, there was no light in the chamber, and the very air felt as heavy, as lifeless and as chill, as if the awful presence of death were brooding over it, and hushing it into unearthly stillness.

Frank could not help fancying he would have known by instinct that death was there, even if he had not caught a shuddering glance at that mysterious something, loosely covered by a long white sheet, which lay stretched silent and deserted upon a distant couch. As if in a waking dream he tried to recall the way in which Evelyn had arranged the death sleep of poor Lily. The lighted taper so expressive of the immortality of the departed spirit. The crucifix laid upon her bosom, and suggesting sweet thoughts of our hopes in Jesus. The holy water they had sprinkled over her—the prayers which they had said around her, and which, albeit, he had not joined them, had yet relieved him of the heavy consciousness of death that pressed upon his spirit, by suggesting the idea that she was somewhere living still. But nothing of all this was to be seen in his mother's chamber; and the rude

aspect of death was there unrelieved by any of those religious practises or emblems, which, all unconsciously to himself, had softened the shock of his first contact with it, in the person of his young sister. It was death, and nothing else, that struck upon his heart, as he entered that desolate room—death, and nothing else that weighed upon all his senses, as he stood for a moment uncertain amid its shadows; death and nothing else that met his eyes, as he drew down that awful sheet, and looked upon the rigid face which lay beneath it.

Yet, in its lonely grandeur, that dead form spoke to him in a way the living woman had never been able to address him; and from her coffin and her shroud, his mother seemed to appeal to his affections, against the harsh decree of annihilation, which scepticism would have impelled him to pronounce upon her.

No! it was impossible! He could not believe that the life from which he had derived his own, had ceased entirely to exist itself—that the soul which had instructed his own in its early dawn, was extinguished at last in the death sleep of the

grave; that the love which had been so entirely his own, had utterly and entirely ceased in his regard.

No—it was impossible! He could not, and he would not believe it! He could not, and he would not relinquish the idea of his mother's existence somewhere; therefore he could not, and would not believe that she was *no more*, in the dark and terrible significance which he had hitherto attached to the expression.

A moment was sufficient to send these thoughts, and a thousand others such as these, flashing like lightning through his brain. Suddenly the words which Evelyn had once spoken recurred to his recollection. He knelt down beside the corpse, and laying his forehead on the cold, stiff hand, burst into a flood of tears.

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When Frank Montgomerie rose from his knees once more, he believed in God, and in the immortality of the soul, for if he had denied either then, he would have severed the last tie that bound him to the memory of his mother!

## CHAPTER V.

THE office which Aileen had so valiantly taken upon herself, as the nurse of Jim, proved in the end no sinecure. Whether from the blow administered by John Nightshade, or from the excitement caused by his preceding adventures, or from both these causes combined together, the poor boy awoke on the following morning in a burning fever, and during the next three days and nights he remained entirely deprived of his senses. Happily he was never violent, but even without this aggravation of the evil, it was sad enough to have to sit beside him hour after hour, while in a low, monotonous, hurried voice, he raved to

himself of his mother and his dead father—of Aileen, and of some one else, whom he only styled, “the Lady.” The latter mysterious individual, was never mentioned without something like a partial return to consciousness. He would look about him wistfully, as if in search of some one, then lift his clenched hand to his eyes, and shaking it with an air of triumph, go on repeating the magic word fifty times over, until at last to Aileen’s great relief, his voice would die gradually away, and he would sink once more into a feverish slumber.

That closed hand evidently contained something very precious to his bewildered senses, but what it might be, neither Aileen nor Bill were able to conjecture, as neither of them were aware of his being in possession of the brooch containing Aileen’s picture. Jim had taken the precaution of hiding it in his bosom on his return to the Red house with Nightshade, and still retaining a dim consciousness, that it was a treasure to be disclosed to no eye but his own, he contrived even while occasionally looking at it himself, to conceal it, with all the cunning of in-

sanity, from his young attendants. Both of them, therefore, were inclined to consider his evident desire to hide something from them, as merely the sick fancy of a fever patient; and in the meantime, Bill contined true, and more than true to his promise of aiding Aileen in her self-elected office.

Every day he renewed the water in the bucket, besides smuggling in such odd ends of candles as he could find, to cheer the little girl in her lonely watches. Whenever, indeed, he could do so with safety, he took the night duty on himself, and even if unable to accomplish this, he would contrive to visit the cellar at early dawn, so as to give Aileen time for her necessary slumbers. Without him, in fact, the poor child would never have had strength of mind or body to carry out her good intentions; but he proved himself on all occasions so kind and clever, so considerate for her comfort, and so zealous for the alleviation of Jim's sufferings, that every thing was made comparatively easy to her, and beyond the fatigue of watching, she had little to endure.

To his dexterous management she owed it also, that she had hitherto escaped all contact with John Nightshade, the only person besides themselves who ever came near the cellar. Bill watched him so narrowly, that up to the third day of Jim's malady, he had always been able to give Aileen timely warning of his approach, when, as was his custom, John came once in the twenty-four hours to examine into the state of the invalid, and to deposit a fresh supply of bread and water on the ground beside him. Upon the evening of that third day, Jim sank at last into a quiet slumber, such as he had not enjoyed since the beginning of his illness, and Aileen sat beside him, longing for the dawn, that she might communicate the good intelligence to Bill.

As usually happens, however, when we are anxious for the quick flight of time, it seemed to lag slower than ever that night to Aileen, and in her impatience she had just lighted another candle, (as if that could hasten it), when she heard, or thought she heard a footstep on the stairs.

It seemed too heavy for the boyish tread of Bill; could it by any mischance be that of Night-shade?

The blood froze in her veins, at the bare idea of meeting the scowling, fierce-eyed man, by that dim twilight, and in that lonely cellar, and she held her breath to listen for the next foot-fall, which would either verify her fears, or do away with them altogether. Hush, it was there again, and a man's foot it was for certain, for the old stairs gave the well known creaking sound by which they always resented any unusual pressure put upon them. It might be indeed, that he, whoever he was, was only going to the kitchen,—but no! The kitchen door was passed, and he was coming straight on towards the ladder staircase, which would bring him to the cellar.

Aileen looked around her in despair. The lumber, behind which Bill had hitherto contrived to conceal the bucket, was not high enough to do the same good service for her person. Besides, her instinctive knowledge of those among whom she was perforce residing, taught her, that if by any accident she were discovered lurking there,

the suspicions caused by such concealment would be likely to prove far more dangerous to herself and Jim, than the most open defiance of John's authority could possibly have done. Wisely therefore, she resolved to wait his coming where she was, and she would not even blow out her candle, lest he should either bring another or detect the odour of the one extinguished. So she remained seated on the low settle stool which Bill had placed for her close beside her patient's pillow. She was pale, still, and trembling, her hands clasped tightly together, and her eyes fixed upon the door, a living, breathing embodiment of the passion of fear, but of fear united to such a consciousness of a good deed done, such exultation at having done it, as gave her for a moment the aspect of a child martyr at the stake. And such indeed, when at last the door was opened, she almost seemed not to John himself, for John was not one to consider of such things, but to another and much younger man who followed in his footsteps.

Before this event took place however, and while Aileen was still watching anxiously on the

inside, she could hear John fumbling about for the key, and growling all the while in a surly manner to his comrade:

"Come in, I say if you're that thin skinned, come in and see for yourself if the young rascal has anything worse the matter than a brain fever, for which cool lodgings and cold water are the only real cure. Come in and you'll see that he's no more been murdered, as you are pleased to insinuate, than yourself. . Why d—— it! what's this?" cried the ruffian, suddenly breaking off in the middle of his speech, "the key in the door, and the door not locked, and—"

Here the door was flung open with a kick, and to his infinite surprise, John found himself at once in the presence of Aileen. Amazement for a moment seemed to strike him dumb, and by the light of the swizzling candle which he carried in his hand, the two looked earnestly on each other. It was a strange meeting and a strange scene, a scene that a painter would not have disdained to copy.

The damp, dank cellar, with its glistening walls, flashing back the gleams of light which

here and there were thrown upon them by the candles; the sick boy slumbering so unconscious of the danger near him on his bed of straw, the innocent child, and the man grown old in robbery and crime, gazing silently in each other's faces; he, with an expression of mingled anger and curiosity on his brutal features, she, with ashy cheek and whitened lips, and eyes gleaming wildly in their fear, deprecating by her very attitude the murderous intentions with which, she never doubted, he had intruded on her solitude.

John certainly felt for a moment as if he had seen a vision, but at last making an effort to recover himself, he flared the candle rudely in her face, in order to assure himself of her identity, and then enquired gruffly enough, yet not so furiously as she had expected.

“What the h— she was a doing there?”

Aileen could not speak for very fear, but she pointed silently to the bed. “Curse him,” replied the wretch, throwing the light upon the sleeping boy, and eying him with a ferocity that made Aileen shake until she could scarcely stand

upright with fear. "Curse him, I don't know what prevents me taking him just as he is lying there, and putting a stopper on his cowardly tongue that will keep it quiet to all eternity." Aileen could not answer, and perhaps it was quite as well that fear had deprived her of the power to do so, for the man was just in that frame of mind in which anything like an entreaty for mercy would have only excited his thirst for vengeance. She was silent therefore, while the ruffian's cruel eye wandered from the sick boy himself to the shrinking, childish form of his self-constituted nurse, and from thence across the cellar to the damp, black walls, that filled up the desolate aspect of the place. Perhaps, there was something in the sight of that fragile, lily-like looking child, whose very beauty seemed of a type to need the shelter of a hot-house, braving cold and darkness, and fatigue, (the natural enemies of a childish nature) for the sake of the very boy whom he himself had been so fiercely willing to destroy, that moved his rough heart in a way it had seldom been moved before. When next he spoke, it was in far milder accents

than Aileen had ever heard from his lips as yet.

"Ain't you afraid, Aileen, to stay all alone by yourself in this dreary place at night now, ain't you?"

"I was at first," replied the child endeavouring to rally her senses for a fitting answer. "But while he was so very bad, I had no time to think, and now I have got accustomed to it."

"You have nursed him through all this bout, then, have you though?" asked John, feeling though he scarce knew why, or wherefore, as if his own savage cruelty were strangely rebuked by such heroic charity in a child.

"I couldn't help it," said Aileen, in a tone of apology for her interference. "He cried out so bad, poor fellow, that I couldn't leave him. And if you please, sir, if you would be so very good as to let me stay here and nurse him until he is quite recovered, I won't give you any trouble, I won't indeed; nor he neither, I can promise for him."

"Please yourself, my lassie. If you are such a fool as to trouble yourself about a fellow like

that, it's no fault of mine," John answered, retreating at the same time to the door, with a sense of self abasement at his heart, such as his hardened nature did not often suffer him to harbour there. No sooner had he disappeared, than Aileen knelt down to thank God for this unexpected change in her tyrant's disposition, a change which in her holy, child-like confidence she never for a moment doubted had been the effects of an especial interposition of Providence in her favor. She was still in that attitude when a hand laid upon her shoulder, caused her to start up in the terrible supposition, that repenting of his momentary good nature, John had returned to wreak his vengeance upon her. It was not John's face, however, that on looking up she found bent pityingly upon hers, but that of a far younger and handsomer man; albeit, the aristocratic beauty of his features was marred by that indescribable something, which low-lived habits invariably impart, and which had already traced many a line about the mouth and eyes, that time, unaided by dissipation and irregular hours, would not have set there for years.

Aileen easily guessed him to be the young man who had accompanied John to the cellar, and who having unperceived by that individual contrived to linger there after his departure, now bent his eyes upon the little girl with a look, less of pity than of reverent tenderness as he said :

“ Then you are really not afraid of remaining alone in this dismal hole? yet surely it must be very lonely?”

“ Sometimes I am, I cannot help it,” said the child; “ but I always try to remember that the *Bon Dieu* is here as well, and that nothing can happen to me if He protects me.”

“ Indeed,” replied the other, unable to refrain from jesting at her innocence; “ does the *Bon Dieu* pay you a visit so often then that you are sure of his being at hand to protect you?”

“ He doesn’t pay me a visit,” said Aileen gravely, “ for as He is every where always, of course He is always here, and doesn’t need to come and go as we do, in order to help his creatures.”

“ Then what need to pray?” said the other

laughing, "if he is always here, of course he knows all you want already, and it is a mere waste of breath and words to ask him."

"And perhaps you might be here all day long, and yet if I did not ask you, for example, to fill that bucket with water for me, it would never come into your head to do it of your own accord," Aileen answered, as she suddenly recollected the series of entreaties she had been obliged to go through with Bill, before he could be prevailed upon to undertake the task in question.

"Most true indeed, my little Daniel," he answered with a smile; "nay though it be treason to your bright eyes to say it, I fear it would take a good deal of their best entreaties to induce me to buckle myself to such a task at all."

"God loves to be entreated also," said Aileen, gravely, and in a low voice; "and so when I pray to Him, my heart grows strong, because I know that He will listen to my prayer. And our blessed mother also," she continued after a little pause, during which the young man had been too much taken aback by the turn she had given to the conversation to be able to reply; "I pray

to her as well, since Jesus will give her anything she asks for, because she is his mother and so he cannot refuse her."

" You are a lucky, little soul to have such a jolly lot of chums doing all they can for you in the other world," replied the other, suddenly shaking off the impression which her first words had made, and speaking with a mock gravity that quite deceived her: " may I ask if you have any other invisible allies to cheer you through your nightly watchings?"

" There is my guardian angel," replied Aileen beginning to feel a little puzzled between the nature of his observations and the gravity with which they were propounded.

" Oh, indeed, and in what capacity is he admitted? as a sweetheart or a simple chum?"

For the first time it seemed to strike Aileen that he was only mocking her, and that too in a way which to her ideas seemed little short of blasphemy; but instead of being abashed she turned her large eyes upon him with such a look of grave surprise, that in spite of himself he felt rebuked beneath it.

" You also have a guardian angel," she observed without taking the smallest notice of his scoffing question; " for God has given one to each of us. A bright, invisible angel, to be always at our side, giving us good thoughts and guarding us from bad ones, helping us to do right things, and keeping us from doing wrong ones."

" Alas, my child! if that be true, some among those angels must have terribly neglected their duty;" the young man could not help saying in a tone quite different from any that he had employed before; for the looks and words of Aileen came like gleams from some half-forgotten Paradise across his mind, recalling times when he had been as innocent as she was then, and when none had been his companions, save those who were guileless and guiltless as himself.

" Perhaps, we have forgotten to ask their help," replied Aileen, greatly reassured by the change in his manner, " or perhaps, we have not minded them when they gave it to us, and so they returned to God and told Him, it was no use staying with us, because we did not heed them."

"Will they come back if we ask them, and promise to do better?" rejoined the other, and strange to say, he asked the question with an unacknowledged wish that it should be answered in the affirmative.

"To be sure they will," cried Aileen, eagerly; "and I will ask for yours this very night, because I don't think you are nearly so bad as the rest of the people who live at the Red-House."

"Not so bad, hey?" replied the other, with a low laugh, which had more of bitterness than gladness in it. "Truly, you are a flatterer, little sprite, and I must needs be a favorite, I suppose, to have such pretty things said about me?"

"No you ar'n't," replied the child, a little vexed. "I wouldn't have said it if it wasn't true."

"True!" he repeated bitterly. "That I am not altogether so bad as the sullen scoundrel who was here just now, or that low, buffooning Dick! Oh, little woman, little woman, what a lesson you have read me, and how I must indeed have fallen, when it is considered a compliment to tell me

that I am not *quite* like them. Nay, do not cry," he continued, seeing that Aileen frightened by his look and tone had begun to weep. "Here, let me dry those poor little eyes at once," and drawing her kindly towards him, he took hold of a corner of the pilfered handkerchief which was hanging, though she did not know it, quite over the bosom of her frock, and was proceeding to dry her eyes with it in a very kind and brotherly manner, when the name in the centre catching his eye, he held it up to the light to examine it more minutely.

Aileen was taken so completely by surprise that she did not dare to interrupt him; but silent and white as ashes, stood at his side while he endeavoured to decipher the letters.

"Rosalie de St. Arnoul," he exclaimed at last. "Is that really your name, or did this handkerchief ever belong to any one else? Tell me the truth at once," he added, perceiving the fit of terror under which she laboured; "and I promise you no harm shall come to you for doing so."

Aileen believed him. She had not been so

many months in a situation of great danger to herself, without acquiring a certain tact at discovering the amount of reliance that might be safely placed upon the professions of those around her; and feeling almost certain that her present companion meant kindly by her, she answered frankly :

“ It is my name, and mama’s; and it was papa’s name also, only he died a little before we left India.”

“ St. Arnoul! died in India! It is passing strange,” he muttered between his teeth, and then looking up, he added quickly; “ Who was your papa? Was he a merchant, or a banker, and was he very rich?”

“ He was M. de St. Arnoul. I don’t know about his being a merchant; but he was rich I know, because he had horses and carriages, and everything rich people have; and mama told me I should be as rich as he had been the moment we arrived in England.”

“ St. Arnoul. It is a French name, yet you speak English as if you had lived in England all your life. How comes that?”

"Papa always spoke it. He had lived in England nearly all his life, I believe, and he liked to talk it better than French—but mama could not learn it at all (papa said she wouldn't), so I talked one with mama and the other with papa, and that made it very easy to do either."

"This handkerchief has cost money, and yet you are dressed like a poor child. How did that happen?" rejoined her questioner, still in the same tone of eager, anxious, and almost nervous inquiry, that had been visible both in his words and looks, ever since the discovery of the article in question.

"He made me change my dress the first thing after he took me away," said Aileen hesitating. "But I managed to hide this handkerchief, because it was so little, I thought he wouldn't find it out. And neither did he, but when I came here, some one took it from me, and it was only the other day that I found it by accident again."

"He, who is he? And how did you fall into his hands? or find your way at all to such a place as this is?"

"We had only just arrived in Paris—and he

had called, and was talking to mamma, when there was a battle, or something or other, and a great deal of fighting and firing, and we all rushed down into the street below. In the crowd we got separated from each other, and I never saw mama again, and I don't know whether she was killed, or anything more at all about her," concluded Aileen, weeping dolefully, as the idea of her lost mother was thus vividly recalled to her imagination.

"But who was he, and where did he bring you to afterwards?" the other impatiently demanded.

"He brought me to some apartments," replied Aileen, evading the first question. "But I don't know where exactly, only it was not at all like the street in which I had been living with mama, but full of old, tumble down looking houses, in such narrow, dirty lanes. There he made me put on a dress like a poor child's, for fear the people should think me an aristocrat, and tear me to pieces, he said. After that, we escaped to England, and he brought me to this old house, and told me, mama had been killed

that day in the fighting, though I don't believe him," sobbed Aileen, "for I can't get it out of my head, but what she is living somewhere still for all that."

"And have you no idea who he really was? this man who acted so strangely by you?"

Here Aileen suddenly checked her sobs, in order that she might examine more minutely the countenance of him who asked the question, and then, as if something in his look had reassured her, she at last broke the silence which had been imposed upon her by her uncle.

"Mama said he was my uncle, but he said he was not; and at last he made her cry, and she sent me out of the room, and I didn't come back until the firing had frightened me."

"Are you certain—quite, quite certain that she said he was your uncle?" he demanded in a voice made husky by conflicting emotions.

"Not quite my uncle, I think," said Aileen hesitating a little. "She told me my aunt was his wife, which made it almost the same thing as if he really was my uncle. And she talked a good deal about him while we were travelling,

and said papa had written him a letter, to ask him to take care of me."

"Your name must be Rosalie," said the young man, taking both her little hands in his, and gazing with strange earnestness in her face. "Why then, do you call yourself Aileen?"

"Papa always called me so—he liked it better than Rosalie," he said, for it was his sister's name."

"My mother's," he said, dropping her hands with a sort of groan. "And yet, God of heaven—why has he done it? What can have been his motive for such madness?"

He buried his face in his hands, and entirely forgetting Aileen, remained absorbed in his own thoughts until a low cry warned him again of her presence. "See! see! He is awake—he knows me. And, oh, my God, he has found mama!" And rushing to the bed, Aileen pounced at once upon the small diamond circled miniature which Jim was now holding triumphantly in his open hand.

"It is mine, my picture, I mean!" she sobbed, scarcely knowing what she said: "Mama

always had it with her. He must have seen her—he must have spoken to her—she must have given it to him. Oh, Jim! where is she? Dear, darling Jim, only tell me where you found it?"

But Jim had fainted away from weakness, and Aileen forgot everything else in the terrible idea that he was dead.

"No, no, it is only weakness. He will come to directly," said Frederick, good naturedly. "I am going to get him something that will do him good, only don't you be frightened, Aileen, I will be back in a moment."

And so almost before Aileen had time to tremble at his absence, he did return, bringing with him a bottle of wine, a little of which administered judiciously, sufficed to revive the fainting boy, and to enable him to look earnestly from Aileen to the picture, and from the picture to Aileen, though he had no power, as yet, to answer to the tremulous, "Oh, where is she? Where is she?" of the eager, little girl, as she knelt at the bed-side.

"It is too soon to ask him," said Frederick,

kindly. "Let him have another sleep, and then he will be able to tell you all about it. I will come back again bye-and-bye and help you to question him," he added, seeing the look of agonised suspense on the poor child's face. "If you disturb him now, you may prevent his ever having strength to recover at all. See he is going to sleep already, and do you only let him alone for the present, and you will find that he will waken bye-and-bye quite refreshed, and able to answer all your questions. I must go now; but I shall not be long away, and should he awake in the mean time, be sure to make him take a little more wine and a bit of bread if you think he can manage to swallow it."

The idea of doing Jim harm by her eagerness, had far more power to keep Aileen quiet than any other argument Frederick could have suggested. Promising to be very careful, she sat down once more to wait, the look of patient sorrow on her face alone revealing all that she would have to suffer from suspense in the mean time. That look of patient resignation haunted Frederick as he left the cellar, and he could

hardly bring himself to believe that he had been speaking to a mere child, so completely had fear and sorrow robbed Aileen of the light-hearted buoyancy of her age, to transform her into the miniature of a pensive woman.

It was nearly dawn before he opened the door of the Red House, and he found a woman on the outside waiting to be let in.

"Esther!" he cried, as she turned on hearing the unlocking of the door. "Why what are you doing out there, old girl? Is there anything the matter that you are on foot so early?"

"Where have you been to?" she asked in a hoarse and strangely altered voice. "I've been a seeking you these three nights, and could find you no wheres."

"Because I've been nowheres that I could be found," he answered mimicking, what he styled her lingo. "Nowheres at least in London. I've been to Brighton races with a couple of pals; and what with one thing or another we lived like princes. However, I got cleaned out at last, so I just cut my luckie, and came back to London. Do you know anything of Lill?"

"It was because of she I sought you," Esther answered in the same constrained, unnatural way that had marked her manner from the beginning.

"I might have guessed it," he answered flipantly; "you have never been too fond of seeking me on your own account, though you know I am very fond of you, and think you as handsome as an angel."

"Peace," replied the girl, with an indignant energy, that would have startled any one less self occupied than the youth who had called it forth. "Haven't I telled you already that I won't take none of that nonsense from you?"

"Faith, only since I've buckled to with Lily," he carelessly rejoined; "and what of Lily after all?" he went on, without having once noticed the flashing eyes with which Esther received the insinuation contained in his last words. "I left her in high dudgeon because forsooth, she was expected to do the civil by some of my pals. However, she has had three whole days to recover her senses, so no doubt she has come to by this time, and as it seems you don't choose to be-

come my Esther, what do you say to taking a message of pardon from me to my little impertinent, sulky Vasthi?"

"She don't need none of your pardon now," said Esther, provoked beyond endurance by his boyish flippancy; "if it's Lily you means by them there nicknames, she'll neither ask nor need pardon from you no more."

"What left me?" cried Frederick with a sudden pang of shame and of remorse.

"Dead!" replied Esther, "and I comed to tell you."

Dead! the shock was so great and sudden that it stunned him, and unable to ask a single question, he followed Esther passively until she reached the orange woman's abode. But then, just as she had her hand on the door of that house, where, as he guessed without a word having been spoken on either side, Lily lay dead and cold, the victim of his sin and her own, he laid his hand on the girl's shoulder, and said hurriedly:

"For God's sake, Esther, one word. It wasn't—it couldn't have been that blow."

"No," replied Esther, "it wasn't to say alto-

gether that; but take no comfort to yourself for that, young man," she added fiercely; "for you bringed her to sin, and grief, and shame, and then broke the heart that had none left but you to look to for kindness; and so to my belief her death's a layin' at your door, as much as if you had pisened, or plunged a knife into her bosom."

## CHAPTER VI.

PROBABLY Esther would have refrained from her last cutting remark, if she had had the smallest idea how deeply Frederick was feeling at that moment the fatal results of his own misconduct. Too proud however, to display the slightest symptom of the emotion from which he really was suffering, he followed her in silence down the kitchen stairs, hesitated one moment before the door, which he guessed from her look opened into the chamber of the lost one, and then feeling that her eye was fixed inquisitively upon him made a desperate effort to conquer a weakness he was ashamed of, stepped boldly in and stood face to face with the silent dead.

Could that indeed be Lily? that marble figure telling so eloquently of death, in its breathless, motionless attitude of repose? Lily, who in her lifetime had been all careless gaiety and incessant movement. Lily whom he had never met before but she had sprung to meet him—to hang round his neck—to laugh, to scold, to play a thousand fantastic tricks, like the merry child that she had scarcely as yet ceased to be? could that be Lily? so still, so mute, so utterly without animation, the Lily that he had known, his Lily! Alas, not now his Lily, but his victim only! His victim; for his was the hand that had laid her there; Esther had said it and he knew that it was true.

At that moment Frederick forgot the failings of poor Lily, as people ever do forget the faults of the loved ones from whom death has separated them for ever.

He forgot the petulance and reproaches of the last six weeks, to think only of those early days of passionate affection when she was all the world to him, and he was everything and more to her; and he could not remember without an additional

pang, the mood of contemptuous kindness, half-indifference, half-good-nature in which only one short hour before he had been prepared to greet her. Then he would hardly have cared if circumstances had separated them for ever; now he would have given all his hopes in this world, and in the next too, if he had had any such hopes to offer, could he have made her again what she had been a few months before, or could he even, (for conscience lay heavy and sore within him) have restored her to the fallen creature that she was, upon the night they last had parted. He was too much absorbed in these sad thoughts at first, to perceive that another person half-concealed by the falling of a curtain was kneeling at the bed-side near him; but Evelyn heard the groan that broke from his lips as he gazed on Lily, and in another moment he was in his sister's arms. It was more than a year since she had seen him, and at first she could not speak, she could only sob, "Frederick! Frederick!" as if to assure herself that it really was her brother, and that he would not refuse to answer to the name. Possibly he was even the more

troubled of the two; but putting his arm quietly round her, he drew her gently towards a chair, and then sat down beside her. At that moment he felt he had hardly strength to stand himself, and so with one hand round her waist, and the other close claspt in hers, brother and sister sat side by side, now gazing wistfully into each other's eyes, and now upon the dead face of that young girl, who had so often sat between them —the gayest, the brightest, and the youngest, of them all. Frederick was the first to break the awful silence by saying in a hollow voice:

“It is like you, Evelyn, to be here. *You*, at least, know how to pity the sinner, though you have not known the temptation or the sin; but the others—uncle, brother, even mother—I suppose they would as lief visit a pest-house, as honor the remains of that unhappy child with their presence.”

“You are unjust, Frederick, indeed you are. Frank remained with her to the last, and—”

Evelyn paused abruptly. She would not add to the remorse she knew he must be already feeling, by telling him how Lily's sin had

weakened the intellect of her mother, or how Lily's death had deprived that mother of her existence.

"Frank, with her!" cried Frederick. "Then he is here somewhere still I suppose, and so I had best depart, for he, like the rest of the world, no doubt, will decide that I have wronged him in his sister."

For a moment, Evelyn was silent, and then all at once she decided on her conduct. Frederick must be convinced of his sin! Now or never he must be wrested from the career into which he had plunged so recklessly. Now or never, he must hear the truth, even though that truth were as a dagger to his soul. Evelyn sickened at the thought that she it was, who was to plunge it there, but she never wavered when a duty was before her. Another day, and it might be too late. He would have returned to his old haunts and old associates, and other events, and other crimes would have weakened, perhaps even entirely effaced the shock given by Lily's death to a mind, ever quick to receive impressions, but ever facile also to forget them.

Feeling, however, that she could not speak to him as she wished, in a place where the presence of the dead unnerved them both, she drew him with a sort of gentle violence to another room, in the same passage, which had been engaged that evening, by Dr. Spencer for her use. There, in a clear voice, but with quivering lips, she told the story of poor Lily's closing hours, and then, while Frederick's face was yet buried in his hands, and his whole frame shook with emotion, she turned to him and said:—

“ And now, Frederick, have you not wronged Frank? Nay, do not fear his coming to reproach you, for he left the house last night, and will not be back till noon. Have you not wronged them both? Dear, dear Frederick. I would not for the world reproach you, especially at this moment, but in wronging the sister, have not you wronged the brother also, and does not your own heart say so?”

But Frederick was not of a disposition to submit quietly to reproaches, however well deserved. The more keenly, in fact, that his conscience smote him, the more pride urged him to

find excuses for his conduct, and just now, unfortunately, he had one, all too palpable to be passed over, in the very education he had received from Frank.

"No," he exclaimed, therefore in answer to her last observation, and with a vehemence that made his sister start—"No, Evelyn, a thousand times over, no! But do not mistake me," he continued, pacing the room in terrible agitation. "I do not mean to deny, that judging by the ordinary ideas of society, he has not a right to say that I have wronged him; but who was it taught me to set at nought those same ideas as mere prejudice and tradition? Did he not ever set the church before me as a sham? And how was I to know that its regulations were not humbug also? Did he not ever advocate divorce? And how was I to guess that he would think it less dishonorable to undo a solemn engagement, than to refuse to be so bound from the beginning? But, to come at once to the very root of the evil," and pausing in his hurried walk, Frederick stood right opposite his sister, and fixed his burning eyes upon her. "Did he

not plead for virtue, and yet destroy the very force of his own pleading, by maintaining that for what I did, or for what I left undone, I was responsible to myself alone? Evelyn! Evelyn! where is the responsibility if there is no judgment? Where is right and wrong, if there is no law to make them? And where is the law, if there is no God to give it? Therefore, I say, and a thousand and a thousand times over, if need be, will repeat it, that however guilty I may have been in regard to others, to Frank I have done no wrong, since I am but what he made me, and my actions are the legitimate consequences of his own instructions."

"But you did not use to believe as he did," said Evelyn, sadly. "You agreed with poor Lily that his doctrines were too horrible."

"I might say what I pleased," said Frederick. "But, mere child as I was, I could only in reality believe as he taught me! It was the rock I split on—Evelyn, I swear it! The hope of future happiness might have stimulated me to good, but to have to endure the restraints of virtue, simply because it was proper to do so;

pshaw, Evelyn, can you wonder that I decided otherwise? or, that having but this one, pitiful life to look to, I resolved at all events, it should be as pleasant as I could make it?"

"But you never told him this," said Evelyn, in a voice of tenderest reproach. "And so he never had a chance of knowing how fatally his favorite theories were working in your mind."

"Do you really believe Evelyn, that any young boy would willingly disclose such a train of thought as mine must have been, even if he had been conscious of its existence? Yes, Evelyn, conscious of its existence, for such thoughts were in me long before I recognised them for what they were—in me, even at a time when I fancied myself enthusiastic in the cause of virtue."

"And when did you know them for what they were?" asked Evelyn, anxious to read his mind aright, in order that she might have a better chance of changing its direction.

"When I knew myself guilty of my first great sin," he moodily replied. "But understand me, Evelyn, I do not mean any mere boy's fault of

petulance or disobedience—but my first great sin as a man, and as men do sin. From that hour the downward course began. For look you,—I knew that I had fallen—that I could never lift myself to the heights from whence I had descended—could never again boast myself as one invulnerable to temptation. So being down, I thought no more of trying to ascend, but finding the fruit of the tree of knowledge pleasant to the taste, resolved to enjoy it to the utmost.”

“ And that was the point upon which all else turned.”

“ Yes! for all else depended upon that one. And yet do not think such evil of me, Evelyn,” he added mournfully, “ as to suppose that I grew to be what I am without a struggle. On the contrary, I hated and despised myself for the weakness of character, the infirmity of purpose which I had displayed; but the very intensity of my regret only plunged me deeper into error, since I knew not how to retrace my steps, and all that seemed left me, was the power of forgetting. That is just the mood that makes a gamester, at least, it made me one, and when

every thing else had been swept away,—my own allowance—the poor two thousand—the christening present of my uncle—the reversion even of my father's fortune sold—then, Evelyn, I fell into the hands of one, who with me and for me did a deed which ever since has made me as utterly his slave, as if he had bought me in the slave markets of Carolina!"

"Poor Frederick! how you must have suffered! and alas, how you must suffer still," said his sister, putting her hand gently and affectionately on his head—for his face was hidden in both his hands.

"Suffer! I believe you," he passionately replied. "Evelyn, from that day to this I have never known peace or joy, excepting indeed when drink has made me mad!"

"And in such a position how could you," she cried as the idea of Lily recurred suddenly to her mind. "Oh, Frederick, was it well to involve that poor child in such deep ruin as your own?"

"Evelyn, on my honor, on my soul," cried Frederick, "I meant no evil by her. I had loved

her always, in every pause in my mad career, her image was before me. Secretly too, I saw her often; she was the only link between me and the home I had rejected, and at last I felt as if I could not live on without her. Then I persuaded her to come with me, and we were to have been married as soon as I could find breathing time to settle down in any place long enough for the purpose; but that I could not do. Circumstances drove me from place to place, and oh, Evelyn, Evelyn, I would not for worlds say an unkind thing of her now, but if she had been a woman of steadier principles and stronger mind, she might not indeed have had power to raise me to her level, but at least she never would have fallen to mine."

"Alas, poor Lily!" murmured Evelyn, but she said no more.

She could not excuse her brother without blaming Lily, or Lily, without magnifying her brother's crime. Therefore she was silent; love sheltered one from all reproach, and death as effectually screened the other.

By this time the sun had fairly risen, and was

shining in brightly at the shutterless windows, making the tapers still burning on the table look sickly by the contrast. Evelyn began to tremble lest the doctor should descend and finding Frederick there, make mischief by his fierce reproaches; for the old man had felt the fate of Lily keenly, and all his love for Evelyn had been insufficient the night before, to silence the bitter denunciations which he had lavished on her destroyer.

She touched Frederick on the shoulder and pointed to the window. He rose at once, but it was only to sit down again and say with evident reluctance.

“Evelyn, I had not meant to tell you—but I must. I cannot have the fate of another such as Lily on my conscience and it would be fiendish to leave her there.”

“Leave her! leave whom?” she answered vaguely, her attention sorely distracted by certain footsteps over head.

“A child whom I met to-night, and who interested me most strangely.”

“Could it be the child whom I saw with

Esther, at Southampton?" Evelyn looked up suddenly and asked him.

"Probably. She was there, I know, though I never saw her until this evening. Evelyn," he went on rapidly, and with the air of one who having made up his mind to speak, was trying to get over the task as quickly as possible; "she does not belong to the people she is with. And oh, Evelyn, it is dreadful to say or think it, but, (I know you can keep a secret) my father seems in some way implicated in the transaction."

"Mr. Sutherland! Frederick, you are ravaging!"

"So I know it must seem to you, and yet look here. The child calls herself St. Arnoul. On her father's death in India, she comes to Paris with her mother; there they meet a gentleman whom her mother introduced to her as her uncle. A quarrel or something like it must have followed, and finally the lady disappears in the turmoil of the revolution, and the child is brought to England, and quietly hid away in the den of iniquity where I discovered her last night."

"But we never heard of the marriage of our uncle."

"We never heard anything about him excepting through my father, who of course told us just what he chose to tell and nothing more."

"It is strange enough, certainly," mused Evelyn; "I remember perfectly Mr. Sutherland's going to Paris just before the last revolution, and moreover he had been very much put out by something the morning that he started. We thought it might have been some unlucky speculation, for latterly Frank tells me he suspects your father has speculated most wildly."

"He has done that all his life," said Frederick, "however, there is always a finish to such things at last, and his I suppose is coming now. But about this child, Evelyn; he must have had a motive, and a strong one too, to enter such a perilous path as this."

"I fear he has not latterly been fortunate. And M. de St. Arnoul was rich, and your father sole manager of his affairs in England," Evelyn answered, in an embarrassed manner. She felt it to be no light thing to suggest such sus-

pitions to a son; more especially to a son, who might hereafter be tempted to retort them in self-defence upon his father.

There was nothing of triumph in Frederick's face, however, but rather a look of deep pain, as if he felt more for his father's humiliation than for that, which by his own misdeeds he had brought upon himself.

"Then you really think it possible, Evelyn," he said at last, and then again he paused.

Evelyn was both touched and pleased by his evident unwillingness to criminate his father.

"Let us rather suppose," she said, "that he had some reason for doubting the validity of the marriage. If we could but find the person calling herself our uncle's wife, we might perhaps discover a clue to his motives."

"She is in London at this moment," replied Frederick: and then in a few words he told the story of the picture, and of his promise to return and question Jim more closely on the subject. "If he has picked it up and knows nothing of its owner," he ended at last by saying, "I will let you know; but if not—"

"We must advertise?" suggested Evelyn.

"I suppose so," he answered uneasily. "But how can we do that, and my father not know it?"

"Easy enough," said Evelyn. "We will advertise to the lady who has lost a miniature; that will tell him nothing, and I will settle to meet her here."

"Here?" he repeated, glancing around the room. "What, here Evelyn! Surely you are forgetting?"

"No, indeed, dear Frederick, that I never can. But they—the hearse, I mean, will be here tonight."

"So soon? and at night too!" cried Frederick, in a tone of indignant sorrow. "Truly they are in a hurry to get rid of her."

"Oh no! no! Frederick. It is not that indeed, how could you suppose it? It is only to bring her to the Ferns—to—to—" Evelyn hesitated, she would not wound his feelings by saying that Lily was to be removed, in order that she and her mother might share the same funeral and grave together; so she only said:

"Do not fret yourself, dear Frederick. The

poor child shall have as much of love and honor as we can give her, and be followed to the grave by all who were nearest and dearest to her in life time."

"With one exception," Frederick groaned.  
"And that one, once the dearest to her of any!"

Alas! Evelyn could not contradict him.

"How shall I know if you have succeeded in your enquiries?" she asked abruptly.

"I will send you a line by Esther."

"And shall I write to you by her?"

"No! I don't choose her to know my whereabouts. Could you drive any night as far as St. Paul's without being questioned?"

"To be sure I could."

"I shall be there every evening from nine to ten until I meet you."

"But if you should be prevented?"

"I shan't," he answered shortly, and then after something like a little struggle with himself he once more returned to the death chamber, and approaching the bed, gazed for a moment mournfully on its occupant.

"Poor child! Poor child!" he groaned. "I shall never see you more. Oh, Evelyn, Evelyn, of all the ill-deeds I have ever done, this will weigh the heaviest when my own hour draws nigh. But for me she might have been living still. But for me she might have been happy, and innocent this moment as when we played together in the shrubberies of 'the Ferns.' Poor Lily! Poor Lily! And to this my madness and my crimes have brought you."

"And so she was innocent!" cried Evelyn, eagerly. "So she was innocent again; before she died. Nay, Frederick, do not look so incredulous! She died in the innocence of her second baptism—the baptism of penance!"

The smile of haughty incredulity that crossed his features, reminded his sister unpleasantly of Frank's opinions, but it softened almost immediately afterwards into something less repellent. He just touched the pale brow of Lily with his lips, and then as if revolted by its rigid coldness, turned suddenly to the living, warm embrace of Evelyn, and instantly afterwards disappeared from the apartment.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE clock of St. Paul's was tolling nine as Evelyn descended from the cab, which had brought her to the city, to fulfil her appointment with her brother. At first she looked around a little bewildered, but her quick eye soon caught sight of Frederick standing under the shadow of the houses, and apparently watching for her arrival. In a moment she was at his side, and catching his arm, said half aloud :

“ Frederick, dear Frederick ! Thank God that we have met again ! My own dear brother, I have been so longing for this hour !”

“ Hush ! Speak low,” he answered hastily,

leading her at the same time down one of the more deserted streets which branched off from the church-yard.

"Now, dear Evelyn, we have no time for mere talk, so tell me at once. Have you seen this woman? And what have you heard?"

"I have," said Evelyn. "The advertisement (which by the way, I thought it best to have put in French), was answered, and this afternoon appointed for an interview at old Judy's. I was rather frightened, however, at first, I confess, when instead of the timid young French-woman I had been expecting, a man, and not a very refined looking one either, made his appearance."

"A man—was it a mistake then?"

"No, no. It was all right enough, as I found in a few minutes. It appears, the poor lady no sooner discovered the loss of her miniature, than she sought it in every street she could think of, until thoroughly worn out by fatigue and vexation, she went into the shop of this man (he is a hair-dresser), and asked for a glass of water. Finding him to be a country man, she

very naturally entered into conversation with him, and happening to mention her recent loss, he promised to advertise the picture for her, and she gave him her address, that he might let her know the result."

" Well," said Frederick.

" After that, of course, the advertisement in the *Times* attracted his attention, and he answered it at once, never doubting of her co-operation and approval. On going to her lodgings, however, to inform her of what he had done, he found her ill in bed, and evidently unequal to making any exertion, so he made her write a few lines on pencil, requesting an interview with the advertiser, and these he brought to me as his credentials."

" And you went?" asked Frederick.

" Of course," replied his sister. " There was no help for it. Evidently she had confided nothing to her agent excepting the history of the missing portrait, and without a personal interview, I should have been as much in the dark as ever about her. I found her ill in bed, as Monsieur La Merque had told me, partly from

sorrow, partly from the injuries she received from the pressure of the crowd the day she lost her child, and from which she seems to think she will never recover.

"Well," said Frederick again, this time almost under his breath. "And what did she say after all?"

"At first I had the greatest difficulty in getting her to say anything, for she has an exaggerated idea of your father's power, and is in mortal terror of his vengeance. At last, however, I succeeded in making her comprehend, that the discovery of her child perhaps depended on her speaking plainly; and then she told me her whole history, which corresponds exactly with that told you by the child, only a good deal more circumstantial, as would naturally be the case. She declares herself most positively to have been M. de St. Arnoul's wife, and indeed there is that in her appearance and manners that makes it impossible to doubt it. She told me that Mr. Sutherland did meet her in Paris, by appointment, and that in the course of that interview he announced his determination to dispute her marriage, and, of course,

the rights of her little girl; but, Frederick, she says that he went yet further, and that he actually burnt the marriage certificate, which she had taken from her desk to show him, before her face."

"Then he also is a villain," muttered Frederick, between his teeth. "And yet how is it that we never heard of M. de St. Arnoul's marriage? The child must be quite ten years old. Is it possible he never acquainted my father with it?"

"Never! and there was the great misfortune, Frederick. Mr. Sutherland was totally unprepared for the discovery. Indeed I know for certain, that with the exception of a legacy to me and Wyllie, he always considered you as our uncle's heir, and I fear he may have so entirely calculated upon this fact, as to misappropriate the money committed to his care."

"It seems like it certainly," Frederick unwillingly assented. "I know that even in the few, brief months of my clerkship in his house he was speculating like a mad man, and the row in Paris, must have run him pretty closely, as it

did every other house connected with French funds. But after all, more than six months have gone by since then, and what has this half-caste of yours been about all this time, that she has never made an effort to recover her child?"

"Oh, Frederick, do not talk of her in that light way," said Evelyn. "She is a lovely, gentle-looking creature, and utterly broken hearted for the loss of her little girl."

"Then why has she never sought it?" urged Frederick, impatiently. "What possessed her to let the thing lay so long over?"

"Because she literally was as ignorant as a child of the proper method of proceeding. Fancy a young and timid woman, bred in all the indolent dependence of a rich creole's home, and utterly unversed in our customs and language, coming alone, and unaided to this great Babylon for such a purpose."

"By-the-way, what put it into her head to come at all? It was a very green step to take, considering the child was lost in Paris."

"The Sœur de Charité who nursed her through the long illness, caused by the injuries she re-

ceived that day, and which with the fright and sorrow seem nearly to have cost her life, managed to ascertain from some of the chance authorities of the hour, that an English gentleman accompanied by a young child, had contrived, as a matter of great favor and solicitation, to get away from Paris soon after the first violence of the emeute was over. Upon this slender chance, she came to London, and had an interview with your father—”

“Who bullied her within an inch of her life for her pains I daresay,” Frederick put in by way of parenthesis.

“I am afraid so,” said Evelyn, the faintest possible smile upon her lip, as she recalled the Frederick of boyhood, in this careless phrase. “At any rate,” she went on, “he half frightened, half persuaded her to go back to Paris, and has aided her since, both by money and advice, (the latter, I fear not of the soundest description,) in a search that has, of course, proved fruitless. A letter however, received very recently from India, induced her to return to England, of course, without acquainting Mr. Sutherland

with her intentions, and since then, she has employed her time in passing all day long through the crowded streets, and looking under the bonnet of every child she met with, in hopes of seeing the blue eyes and golden ringlets of her own beneath it. But the sickness of hope deferred, proved too much for her enfeebled frame, and I found her, as I said before, unable to leave her bed from illness."

"Poor thing!" said Frederick, touched with pity in spite of the irritation he was feeling at the moment, in consequence of the exposure threatening his father. "But after all, what are we to do, Evelyn in this accursed business?"

"Do, Frederick? Why, endeavour to restore the child to her mother, of course. How can you doubt it?"

"And what, if such an attempt should compromise my father?" he doubtfully demanded.

"I hope it will not," replied his sister, after a moment's pause. "But after all, Frederick, surely this is a case, in which we must do what is right without regard to consequences."

"And yet those consequences may be fear-

ful," replied Frederick, shaking his head. "My father would never have gone so far, without some terrible reason for his conduct; and even now, unfortunately for myself, I know the men that he has employed too well; and you must take heed, Evelyn, that in seeking to set that child at liberty, you do not put her life in jeopardy as well."

At that moment, the sinister look which Evelyn had once detected on Mr. Sutherland's countenance, when she and Frank were speaking about Aileen, recurred to her recollection; and she shuddered at the bare thought of what, cruel and unscrupulous as he had hitherto shown himself, his next move in the desperate game he was playing might prove.

"Frederick," she said after a long and anxious pause: "It is not for the sake of our little cousin only, that I speak. It is for your father's also. Sir Walter St. Clair will be in England in a few days, and then there must be a trial, and a public exposure of this wretched business, if he cannot manage to settle it before hand."

"Sir Walter St. Clair! Who is he?"

"The partner of the house of St. Arnoul, and joint guardian with your father, of the little Rosa. As far as I can understand from her passionate and incoherent way of telling the story, M. de St. Arnoul whom she speaks of as quite an old man, (you know he was twenty years older than our mother,) must have married her in the first instance, chiefly out of pity. Her father, (a merchant also,) ruined himself by speculation, and died of grief, leaving her almost a child, and quite as helpless, with the additional misfortune, I suspect, of being singularly pretty; for she mentioned her position as having been one of unusual danger. In her distress, she applied for advice to M. de St. Arnoul, and he then offered her the shelter of an old man's home, for want, as he said of any thing better. He was very kind to her, but so ashamed of what he thought the world would designate as an old man's folly, that the marriage was quite private, and never made known beyond their most intimate acquaintance.'

"He has made a nice mess of it," said Fre-

derick impatiently. " See what a hold he has given my father upon her."

" And yet fear of Mr. Sutherland was at the bottom of this mystery," replied Evelyn; " his natural timidity had been increased by ill health, until it seems to have degenerated into mere nervous folly; and having formerly made a will in your favour, he could never muster sufficient courage to acquaint your father with an event, by which your expectations were first endangered, and after the birth of Rosa entirely destroyed. So he put off the notification of his marriage from one day to another, until it became almost impossible to do it at all; and it was only on his death bed, that he penned that letter which brought Mr. Sutherland to Paris, where in the first frenzy of his disappointment, he denied the validity of Rosa's birth, and destroyed the certificate of her mother's marriage."

" Was he aware at the time, that he was not sole guardian?"

" Most unluckily he was not; if he had been, he would hardly have ventured to go such lengths. Our uncle was dying at the time—hardly able

even to hold a pen—his letter therefore was as brief as possible, neither naming the will nor the second guardian, but merely recommending his wife and child to Mr. Sutherland's care. Directly after our uncle's death, the widow, without taking advice of any one, sent off his letter, enclosed in another from herself, appointing a meeting in Paris with your father, as her husband had suggested. The letter of explanation, which Sir Walter St. Clair despatched a few days later, must by some unlucky chance have been delayed; at least it seems hardly possible Mr. Sutherland would have acted as he did, had he been acquainted with its contents before reaching Paris."

"St. Clair, St. Clair," repeated Frederick in a dreamy sort of way, "didn't a man of that name once use to visit at our house; long ago I mean, in the lifetime of our poor mother?"

"Yes," said Evelyn faintly, "but he was neither rich nor titled then; both have lately come to him through a cousin. However, I did not ask anything about him; but Madame de St. Arnoul speaks of him as of her husband's firmest friend; and one to whose energy and perseverance

he is indebted for the enormous fortune he died possessed of. She had written to him the moment she was able after losing Rosalie, but that was not for many weeks, as the fever had deprived her of her senses: and unfortunately he was from home at the very time when the letter should have reached him. So that it followed him about from place to place, and it was only just before leaving Paris this last time that she received an answer. Poor thing, she suffered agonies, she says, in thinking that perhaps he also had abandoned her in the hour of her utmost need."

"She had better finish the romance at once then, by marrying her paragon and sending him in search of the missing heiress," said Frederick pettishly, an uneasy consciousness of his own shortcomings always disturbing his temper, whenever the high character of another became the subject of encomium.

The word grated harshly on Evelyn's ear, but she did not show it, and answered calmly:

"It would be more like the finale of a novel, certainly, if she did so; but remember,

Frederick, in such a case it would be his bounden duty to unveil your father's conduct to the world, while yours is the more graceful one of shrouding it from observation."

"But how? but how?" said Frederick; "I cannot say, I see my way through this business at all, Evelyn."

"It seems to me that there are two ways, Frederick; and if one fails, you might try the other."

"And the first way, Evelyn, for I conclude that is the easiest?"

"To see your father,—to put before him the consequences of his own act;—to endeavour to persuade him to withdraw that unhappy child from the den of iniquity to which he has consigned her, and to restore her to her proper guardians. Should he however, prove obdurate, then Frederick, you have a firm heart and a strong will, and I trust entirely to your courage and address for the accomplishment of the same object."

"To see my father!" repeated Frederick, slowly. "To put before him the consequences of his conduct! And what right have I to twit

him with his misdeeds; or how can I, for a moment hope, that he would ever listen to the remonstrances of one, who has dishonoured him as I have done?"

"If you cannot—no one can," said Evelyn, sadly. "You know he never loved *me*, and since you left us, he has grown more stern than ever to Wyllie, and to me."

"Poor Wyllie! what has he done to vex him?" said Frederick, hastily. "He used to be as inoffensive as a girl."

"For that very reason, perhaps," said Evelyn. "He despises him as being not the stuff which men are made of; and yet I am much mistaken if there is not a latent energy in Wyllie's character, which will one day make him not a man only, but a distinguished one as well."

"Truly there is much need of it, were it only to wash out the stain which I have left upon our name," said Frederick, sadly.

His sister's heart sunk within her at the tone of self-abasement in which this was uttered, and she whispered:

"If you would but be true to yourself, and to

your higher impulses, Frederick, there is no one I know of, whose chance of greatness is better than your own."

"It is too late, Evelyn. As the tree falls there it must lie; and I fell early; so early, that even now I sometimes wonder how it was that I so soon emancipated myself from the fetters of my father's iron will."

"The very energy and strength of purpose which enabled you to do that," urged Evelyn, "was intended to carry you to nobler things; only let it be employed for good, and not for evil; and, believe me, you will become great, almost, I was going to say, in spite of yourself."

"In *spite* of myself, indeed it would be," Frederick replied, with a sad and bitter emphasis on the second word.

"And see here!" cried Evelyn, without appearing to heed the bitterness of his manner. "See, here is an opportunity that will set you at once on the right path—that will give you a chance of reconciliation with your father—that will help you to make your peace with Heaven, and win you that proud consciousness

of an honest purpose, which is half the battle in the struggle of life. Oh, Frederick, why do you hesitate? Seek out your father—speak to him of the injustice he is doing; persuade him to repair it. And when by one noble effort you have rescued that poor babe from the pit of iniquity, in which sooner or later her innocence must be engulfed; when you have restored her to her mourning mother, pure as when she was taken from her, then may you look up to Heaven once more with a fearless eye and exulting heart; for assuredly the angels to whom these little ones are given in charge, will be rejoicing with you over the purity you have saved from soil. Oh, my brother! my brother! Do not harden your heart to this call upon it—do not reject the duty which God himself is offering to your acceptance. Yes! for surely it must be the very mercy of God Himself, that gives you the chance of this one good deed, as an expiation for that other dark and sinful one, which has sent Lily to sleep in a dishonored grave."

"Say no more," said Frederick, entirely vanquished by this last allusion. "Say no more,

dear Evelyn, I will do anything for your sake."

" Dear Frederick! Can you not do a noble thing for a nobler motive still! Can you not look up to heaven and say, 'not for man's sake, but for God's.' "

" No, Evelyn, I cannot. I can do it, because you wish it, and because my mind revolts from the cruelty of leaving an innocent child—and that child with my mother's blood flowing in its veins—to rot in a den of thieves. For these reasons I can do it; but when you ask it for the sake of God—Bah, Evelyn—the stuff is not in me for such a pledge a hat, and you would have a right to distrust me if I took it without."

" But Frederick, dear Frederick, I don't want to tease or argue with you; but only just say, if you were sure of His existence, then you would do this thing, would you not, not for my sake but for His."

" Yes, Evelyn, to be sure I would. But as matters stand, you must be content with what you've got; and let me tell you it is no pleasant

duty I have undertaken in speaking to my father at all."

"I know it, dear one, and am most grateful! So I will hope for the best; only had you given me the pledge I wanted, I should have felt certain; whereas now, I can only hope you will have strength of purpose to carry out these good intentions."

"What do you mean, Evelyn—or why should you doubt me?" asked Frederick, in a tone which he felt he had a right to make reproachful; for it was in truth no small sacrifice which he had made of his own feelings to her wishes, when he had consented to seek a meeting with his father at all.

"I mean Frederick, that in the one case you would have been acting upon principle, but in the other, upon impulse only, and impulse is so uncertain, that I never feel sure of any virtue, which originates only in its promptings."

"I cannot help it," said Frederick doggedly. "I havn't so much virtue of any kind left, that you need be particular, as to its phase, origin, or degree, Evelyn. So if you are wise,

you'll just take what you get, and be thankful for it."

"So I am, indeed, dearest Frederick," said his sister affectionately. "Most grateful! And I cannot help hoping also, that this first step in a right direction may be the beginning for you, of a long return to bright good days and virtue."

"No, it won't—don't think it," he answered hoarsely. "Lily and her coffin will be between me and bright good days, from this one to the end of all. But all this time we have not settled about my father," he added abruptly, changing the subject. "How am I to meet him? and when? and where? Not by daylight; for I am a son of the night, you know, Evelyn, just now; you must not forget that in your arrangement."

She was little likely to forget it; but she repressed the sigh, which answered to his words, and only said:

"You had better not try it yet—Frederick, until—"

"Lily is buried, I suppose," he put in, seeing

that she hesitated. "And her mother, also. For I have heard of her death, Evelyn, though you would not tell me."

"It will be the day after to-morrow, Frederick. The day after that, will do for your business. Mr. Sutherland always walks half way from the city to 'the Ferns.' They meet him somewhere on the heath—he is never at home now, before seven o'clock."

"The day after. Will he go to the old shop so soon?" asked Frederick, doubtfully.

"Frederick, he goes to it even now. In the midst of all this sorrow and confusion, he has not only never missed a day, but he goes earlier, and stays later than ever he did before; and it is impossible not to feel that, if he has not a very unusual amount of business to transact, there must be something terrible weighing on his mind, which he seeks to dispel by labour."

"And if that fearful something really is there, how can I venture to unveil it? I, who have not even that share in his confidence, which an ordinarily good son might be possibly possessed of."

"And yet you are the only human being upon earth that he really clings to. And I am certain that if you promised to reform in earnest, there is nothing you could ask, that he would not grant you."

"Evelyn, can you not comprehend? It is quite too late for that," said her brother impatiently. "England is closed upon me for ever, and that is why I rejected an offer which he made me some six months ago; for I might as soon set up here as an honest man, as a kite take up his abode unchallenged in a poultry yard."

"Alas! I know that too well already, Frederick; and I am certain that Mr. Sutherland would spare no expense to enable you to work out your career in some other land. But if he should not, you know I am not penniless, and you must hold me pledged to the last farthing to your assistance. Surely, you cannot doubt my word, dear Frederick?"

"I can neither doubt your generosity, nor your word," said Frederick, much moved by his sister's kindness. "And let me tell you, Evelyn, now that my father appears to have failed in

honor, you are the only creature upon earth of whom with truth, I could say as much."

"And lest you should chance to be tempted to disbelief," said his sister playfully, putting a small pocket-book into his hand, "I have brought you five hundred pounds to-night to begin with; it will help you in any plan you may have formed for leaving England, besides making you feel more independent in your meeting with your father, should he try to bend you to his will by money."

"Five hundred pounds out of your poor five thousand! No, indeed, Evelyn, I cannot consent to rob you."

"Indeed, you do not rob me; for I mean to exact principle and interest both, some day or other, when you have made your fortune. And now, dear one," she continued, putting the pocket book, in spite of all resistance into his pocket, "I know you will do your best with Mr. Sutherland, but should you fail?—"

"Aye, indeed, should I fail?" said Frederick, looking very much as if he felt certain that he should.

"In that case," said his sister—"Is there no other way? Can you not bribe these men?"

"Remember that my father can always outbid me in the market."

"All that I am possessed of," said Evelyn, earnestly, "I would deliberately sacrifice in such a cause."

"I will do what I can," said Frederick; "but if I fail, with my father, I must see you again to settle upon some other plan."

"Remember that if your father's character is to be saved at all, not an hour must be lost," said Evelyn. The other guardian (she could not bring herself to repeat his name) may be in England any day after the first of the month, which will be next Tuesday."

"Well, then, after I have seen my father, could you meet me any where on the common, at the back of the house?"

Frederick could not bring himself to ask an interview in the shrubberies, which had been his trysting place with Lily, and which would have been nearer, and therefore more convenient to his sister.

Evelyn was about to say so; but a suspicion of his real feelings crossing her mind at the moment, she only answered:

“To be sure I can. But it must be after ten o’clock, for we dine so late, I could not get away before.”

“At ten o’clock then,” said Frederick, “I will be waiting for you near the oak copse at the bottom of the hill.”

“And now I must say good bye,” said Evelyn for while they had been engaged in this conversation, Frederick had led her up one street and down another, until at last she found herself at the old orangewoman’s abode, where she knew Esther was waiting to fetch her a cab, “and now I must go; but oh, dear Frederick, before we part, will you not promise by all you hold sacred (alas, I had forgotten, nothing it seems is sacred in your eyes), but at least will you not swear to me by that dear one who lays cold and dis-honoured in her shroud this night, that you will strain every nerve to save that other child from the fate, which has laid this one low. Oh, brother brother,” she added, catching a glimpse of his

darkening countenance as they stood together in the passage, "forgive me, I did not mean to reproach or wound you, but you have a twofold interest in this business. It will be a mercy to the child and an expiation to poor Lily."

The cloud passed away from his brow, and he said :

"I promise."

She wrung the hand he gave her, looking earnestly into his eyes the while, as if there to read the truth, and then they parted, he walking rapidly down the street, while she remained standing in the passage until Esther should return with the cab.

The girl was longer than she expected, and when she did come back she put a note written in pencil in Evelyn's hands. It was from Frederick, and contained only these few lines—

"Dear Evelyn, I had forgotten—or rather I had not courage to ask—cut me off a lock of her hair and keep it till we meet; do not send it by the girl, it would be profanation."

"Poor, poor fellow," thought Evelyn melting

into tears of pleased and sorrowful affection : " if this had only been an attachment ennobled by principle and sanctified and made binding by religion, how different might have been his lot in life, and Lily's also."

And alas, where was Frederick himself, or how was he employed, while his sister thus shed joyful tears over the conviction that none of his better feelings or affections had been entirely blunted by his past career.

Tortured by the remorse, which Lily's death and Evelyn's conversation had excited in his soul, he at first wandered through the streets in a vague and hopeless manner ; but unused to mental discipline of any kind, this sort of self re-crimation soon became too painful to be endured, and hoping to distract his thoughts, he rushed into a house only too well known to him already, where gambling in its worst and lowest phase was privately carried on.

In the beginning he had of course only meant to amuse himself with the loose cash he had about him ; but as the night advanced, he grew mad with excitement, ill-luck, and drink ; and at

last, hardly knowing what he was about, he cast poor Evelyn's gift upon the table—staked it on the next throw—and lost it!

The money was instantly swept away, and he left the house without a shilling in his pocket.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE day after the double funeral of Lily and her mother arrived at last, and Mr. Sutherland spent it as Evelyn had predicted, as usual in the city. She was mistaken however, in supposing that he remained there longer than he had always been in the habit of doing before; and had she followed him on the evening in question, she would have discovered that the time which she imagined to be employed on business was, in reality, devoted to a sauntering walk along the heath, either for the purpose of meeting some one by appointment there, or because the gloom of his once cheerful home oppressed him, and he

shrunk from encountering the sorrowful faces which he knew would be assembled round his hearth. Proud and reserved by nature and by habit, he had never indeed joined personally in the chit-chat of the young people; but so long as Frederick made one among them, he had been no inattentive observer of all that was going on, having, in reality, enjoyed the spirited sallies of the lad with an intensity of delight, such as parents whose affections are more evenly divided among their offspring can hardly perhaps imagine. But when the son of his idolatry had fallen away from him, and the one loved face had disappeared from the home-circle, then he settled down into a dreary indifference, as he believed, to everything that was passing in his own abode, and never, for a moment, did he even suspect how much of comfort he was deriving still from the cheerfulness of those remaining. Now however, that Evelyn, grieving over the fate of Lily, and pre-occupied by that of Aileen, seemed to have left her old habitual cheerfulness in the grave of her ill-starred relatives; now that Frank would sit for hours with his head upon his hand,

plunged into utter forgetfulness of those around him ; now that the doctor himself, constitutionally the most vivacious of the party, after various abortive attempts at reviving the merriment of other days, was fain to solace himself by a silent pacing of the room, and repeated attacks upon his snuff-box, Mr. Sutherland's home had become so distasteful to him, that in the whole twenty-four hours of sleeping and waking misery, which he had condemned himself to endure, there was nothing he dreaded so much as the moment of his re-entrance into that gloomy circle, where he felt himself at once thrown back for distraction upon the resources of his own mind—that mind, which could only present him now with images to awaken sorrow, or what he yet more probably feared, remorse.

Under the influence of such feelings, he left 'the Ferns,' each day earlier, and returned to it later ; but on the evening in question, he lingered even longer than usual on the hill, pausing ever and anon, and looking back as if in the expectation of meeting some one. Late as it was, a few idle persons were still loitering about; but ap-

parently the individual he was in quest of was not among them, for after one other last long look over the nearly deserted heath, he turned his back upon it altogether, and was about to enter the foot-path that would bring him to his own house, when a detaining hand was laid upon his shoulder.

“Dick!” he involuntarily exclaimed, turning suddenly round upon the intruder.

But it was not Dick who stood there before him:—the tall form enveloped in a cloak, and the features more than half concealed beneath the shadow of a broad-brimmed hat pressed heavily on the brow.

For a moment, Mr. Sutherland’s heart stood still, and he had some difficulty in repressing the shudder that seized upon his frame. He did not speak. A name, indeed, was trembling on his lips—the name of the only creature he had perhaps ever loved really and disinterestedly on earth; and yet he would not say it! What if the mysterious looking individual before him were a stranger? What if it were not he? Not for worlds would he have breathed that

name in the presence of any, save him to whom it of right belonged—he felt as if he had scarcely strength just then to name it even to that loved one himself.

So they stood for an instant, face to face, the father and the son; each conscious of guilt in himself and in the other, each unwilling by word or look to commence reproaches. Their irresolution lasted but a second. Pushing back his hat in his old impetuous way, Frederick gazed with an air half-sorrowful, half-defiant on his father; but Mr. Sutherland was the first to speak.

“Frederick!” he said. “My son, Frederick! Do you come back to me at last?”

“If I come,” said Frederick, in a hollow voice, misunderstanding his father’s meaning, “console yourself, father, ’tis but for a moment!”

“A moment!” groaned the father. “A moment! To me, who have given you my life, my labour, my soul, and my salvation! A moment, you say. Then surely, even in this world, God deals justice on his creatures!”

“To what purpose should I come, father? I

could but bring disgrace upon your gray hairs, and the young head of my brother. For his sake, sir, forget that you had once another son, and true or false, give him I implore you, other training than was given to me."

"What," cried Mr. Sutherland, in a tone of unutterable contempt. "Give you up for your cripple brother—the puling pupil of a puling woman! No, Frederick, the hopes of my house are built upon you, and with you they must perish, or rise to their fulfilment."

"Then they must perish!" cried Frederick violently. "Is it possible, father, that you are still so utterly in the dark about me, as not to know me yet, for the gamester, the swindler, the villain that I am? Is it possible, you have never heard, how, under fifty different names and titles I have wandered half through England, everywhere living on the folly and credulity of others, everywhere an object of suspicion to the authorities, everywhere escaping and glorying in escaping, by some deeper fraud, than the one which had attracted notice? Good heaven! 'father!' Is it possible you do not know these

things; or that even, if you were in ignorance before, the grave of your sister's child has not accused me, and compelled you in your own despite, to pronounce judgment on the wickedness that laid her there!"

"Frederick," said his father in a strange unnatural voice. "You wrong my affections, if you think I have need to be informed of any incident, even the minutest, in your past career. Believe me, my son, my eye has never been off you for a moment; I have followed you step by step, through all your follies—even to your stolen interviews with Lily, which I winked at, hoping they might lead you to better things. Nay, do not interrupt me with those flashing eyes. I never anticipated the sequel. Never for a moment supposed that she would prove so reckless, even of appearances—never dreamed of her union with you, otherwise than by legal marriage; and a thousand and a thousand times over, have I cursed her since, in the bitterness of my disappointed soul, for the unblushing folly by which, instead, she set the seal upon your ruin and her own."

"Apparently you forgot then," said Frederick bitterly, "that both she and I had been trained in utter contempt of all authority, or of any bondage not imposed by our own reason?"

"I remembered, at any rate, that she was a woman," replied Mr. Sutherland, not passionately but sadly. "And I thought that precisely, because she was a woman, and that disinterestedly she loved you, she would take care to keep unsullied that fair name, which was the only inheritance she had to bring you. Too late I discovered that I had been mistaken; and can you wonder, if, when I found that instead of luring you back to your old position, as I so fondly hoped, she rather riveted you to your present one, by stooping to share it with you, I cursed her folly and my own yet more, which for once had trusted, and built hopes upon a woman?"

Frederick almost groaned aloud. There was something in the unexpected, and as his conscience told him, most unmerited softness of his father's manner towards himself, that stirred him to the depth of his proud heart, in a way

no reproach, however cutting, could possibly have done.

He had occasioned so much sorrow to this father, who loved him still, in spite of all his errors; and was he now to add another drop of bitterness to the cup, which he had filled so full already? Yes, there was no help for it! He had pledged his word to Evelyn, and he was feeling so guilty towards her, for the way in which he had abused her generosity a few nights before, that he felt he could not again face her, without having made, at least, an effort to redeem his promise. With his characteristic impetuosity, therefore, he plunged at once into the business.

“Father! I have tried you sorely. I know it well enough, and little as you may think it, I have grieved over it often, even in the beginning, but oftener still of late. And I am grieving over it at this moment,” he added desperately, “though I have only come to fling another trouble in your face.”

“Out with it, Frederick,” said Mr. Sutherland calmly; though a strong uncomfortable pre-

sentiment of what was coming next, brought a damp dew to his forehead. "Trouble there may be for me in what you have to say, but sorrow—none, if it is not about yourself. You are, as you ever have been, my only one."

Notwithstanding these kind and encouraging expressions, the young man hesitated still. He had always loved his father, but he had always feared him also.

There was something in the almost womanly tenderness which that silent, solitary, stern man had ever manifested for him, and for him alone, that had touched his heart, even as a child with love, though unfortunately it was a love so mingled with awe and fear, as to be useless for all purposes of parental guidance, since instead of commanding confidence it repelled it. Even now, though so many months had elapsed since he had openly defied his father's authority, and put aside his control, something of the old vague feeling of childish awe crept over him the moment he found himself in personal contact with him, and added to the embarrassment which, under any circumstances, he must have felt in putting

a question which, shape it how he might, must still come forth in the form of an accusation Mr. Sutherland, unintentionally, helped him to begin by alluding to his last words.

" You spoke of some new trouble, Frederick. To what were you alluding?"

" To the death of my uncle, sir. I thought it possible there might be some mercantile difficulties consequent on that event."

" How do you know that he is dead?" Mr. Sutherland asked in a hard hollow voice.

" I have been so informed. You can best tell me, if correctly. And I have been also told," Frederick turned his head away as he was speaking, for he could not bear to look upon his father's face just then: " I have been also told, that he has left a widow, and a daughter. Here, again, I must look to you for a true version of the story."

" Whoever treated you to that piece of gossip, ought to be able to substantiate it themselves," he answered doggedly.

" It is so likely, sir," Frederick answered, with an affectation of indifference he was far from

feeling. "Men in India, whether young or old, are so apt to marry, or be married, that I for one require little testimony to believe it. And I confess this is the very subject upon which I have come, for I greatly fear denial of his marriage will not ultimately avail you much, while every hour of such denial can only render an after avowal more humbling, or an after discovery more disgraceful."

"Frederick! have you sought me but to threaten?"

"I have not, sir, you know I have not. I came here not to threaten, but if possible, to save you from a danger upon which you are rushing headlong. Nothing less, believe me, could have given me courage to face one whom by my conduct, I am conscious I have so grossly injured."

"And to what course would your wisdom counsel me?" Mr. Sutherland could not help saying it sarcastically, even though his heart was trembling with unwonted joy at the interest thus manifested in his concerns by Frederick. The taunt would, at any other time, have driven the

young man furious, but just then his soul was engrossed by less selfish feelings than were the ordinary growth of the soil, and he answered as if he had not heard it.

"Surely there can be but one safe course in such a case, and that is to acknowledge the wife and restore the child as soon as may be."

"Then the one safe course would be absolute destruction!" said Mr. Sutherland, with a groan. "Frederick! Frederick! You know not what you say! This thing is impossible. It is madness even to speak about it."

"But how impossible? How madness?" asked Frederick, mistaking the gist of Mr. Sutherland's reply; "since I have seen the child, and know that she is close at hand."

Mr. Sutherland could not refrain from an involuntary curse upon the supposed treachery of Dick; but he made no other reply, and Frederick went on eagerly:

"It was no fault of Dick's, I do assure you, sir, for it was by the merest accident in the world, that I went to the house where he had placed her. I had never been there before,

and I wouldn't have gone there then, if I hadn't wanted to see Dick on some private business of my own."

"Well," said Mr. Sutherland with so poor an effort at evasion, that he would have heartily despised any one else capable of such feeble folly : "Even admitting for the sake of argument that there be a child, and that the one you saw was she; still, I say, you have not removed the impossibility of her restoration, since the mother, if she be still alive, is in France, and neither you nor I know where to seek her."

"That impossibility at least, I can do away with, sir; for the mother also is in London at this moment."

"In London! d——n her French cunning! that she should have so completely outwitted me."

Mindful of his former imprudence with regard to Dick, Mr. Sutherland suffered this thought to pass expressionless through his mind, while the only words he uttered were :

"In London—at the *Sabloniere* did you say? I did not catch the address you gave."

"Because I did not give one," replied Frederick, "but it will be easily ascertained; and in the mean time, I want you, father, thoroughly to understand, that she is in the hands of those, who will leave no stone unturned to see justice done both to herself and her little girl."

"Pshaw, Frederick, you are faint hearted; that poor, puling, helpless half caste! and pray who are these doughty champions, who have undertaken to fight her battles for her?"

Frederick had for some time been in nervous expectation of this question, which he had made up his mind should not be answered. He was quite aware already that his father had little love for Evelyn, and he dreaded the addition to her other troubles, which any increase of his harsh feelings would certainly entail. Putting aside the last part of Mr. Sutherland's observation, therefore, he replied simply to the former.

"The mother may be all you say, sir, half witted, helpless, half caste; but remember it is even as I have told you, she is in the hands of those who have skill enough to unravel the tangled skein of her fortunes, and perseverance

enough not to let it go until all is smooth. And then again there is the child; she speaks English perfectly, is intelligent and determined beyond her years, quite cognizant, moreover, of the principal facts of her abduction; and when she escapes, for escape some day she must, since even the most vigilant cannot be unceasingly on the watch, what do you think will be the consequences?"

"Curse her," Mr. Sutherland could not forbear muttering half aloud, "and a thousand, million curses on myself, for a weak, shortsighted fool, not to have left her where I found her in the streets of Paris! A chance shot, an aimless blow, a sudden rush of the infuriate multitude, would have done that deed for me, which other men, so circumstanced, are forced to do for themselves at the hazard of their lives. Her prating tongue would have been for ever silenced, and I no worse than I was before, in the wise judgment of the world."

"I do hope, sir, there is nothing really in your position to authorise this bitterness, no such insurmountable objection as you seem to fancy,

to the course I would prevail upon you to take; and I hope it all the more," Frederick added, a slight faltering perceptible in his voice, "because I would not willingly act in opposition to you now, and yet I am pledged, as far as I am able to effect it, to the restoration of this child."

"Then," said Mr. Sutherland, turning suddenly, with such a fierce calmness upon his son, that the latter involuntarily recoiled, "then, sir, you are under a solemn promise to effect the ruin of your father."

"Ruin! good heavens, father! do you mean to say the bank has come to that?"

"Curse the bank!" cried Mr. Sutherland furiously, "do you think then that there is no other ruin for a man but that of money? I tell you, Frederick, that it is not fortune only that will be swept away at one fell swoop, by this fool's pledge of yours, it is honor, reputation, fame, all that man holds dear or sacred—all that wins him the consideration of the world. Frederick, the day that child proves her claim to M. de St. Arnoul's fortune, will see me go forth from the company of honorable men with the brand

of a forger upon my forehead. Go forth, did I say? I should rather have said, thrust forth by the strong hand of the law, to expiate on hulk or treadmill (it little matters which), the one fatal error of a life, otherwise spotless in its mercantile integrity."

Mr. Sutherland broke off suddenly, and Frederick remained mute and cold, waiting till he should speak again, and utterly unable to take in, as yet, the full signification of his father's words, or to realise the possibility of such a stigma as he talked of, being ever attachable to that father's name.

"Bear with me a moment longer," the miserable man at last resumed, though in a tone so low and broken, that it seemed but the echo of the full firm voice, which Frederick remembered in the days of old. "Bear with me, yet a moment longer, and to you I will confide (there lives not that other human being to whom under any circumstances whatever, I would do so), to *you* I will confide the true nature of my position; and then it will be for you to say, whether you choose to ruin your father, or

to screen him from detection. When M. de St. Arnoul left England for the last time, he assured me of his own accord, that as he never meant to marry, you and your brother should share with Evelyn de Burghe in the succession to his fortune, and a will to that effect was accordingly drawn up. After that, he frequently employed me in investing large sums for him in the funds, or other ways; but soon after your mother's death, he ceased to write to me himself, and all necessary communications with me were carried on by his junior partner, in his name. At the time, I thought little or nothing of the change; but now, I suppose, it was this cursed marriage which made him feel shy of addressing me himself. I succeeded in making many advantageous investments for him, besides funding large sums of money in his name, and at his desire. In all these transactions, I acted with as much promptitude and caution for him, as I should have done for myself; in fact, at that time, I had no sort of temptation to do otherwise. Everything would come to you at last, and with the profits of the bank, which, (as the sum left him by his

uncle would be more than sufficient for a boy like Wyllie), I meant to leave entirely in your hands, you would have been one of, if not quite the richest commoner in England. In those days, I hoped you would have graced your fortune; but let that pass," he added, seeing that Frederick winced at the allusion,—“believe me, if I have alluded to it at all, it was not to wound your feelings, but to make you comprehend more thoroughly, how this desire to put you in possession of such a fortune, as might enable you to run for the highest prizes in the land, influenced all my conduct, and led at last to the very action, for which you are so willing to denounce me to the world. To attain the end I had in view, I was not contented with the ordinary modes of making money; I went still farther, and speculated to an extent that seems, on looking back, almost like madness. The fate of some of these undertakings is still uncertain, but many proved decided failures. This added to the bankruptcies, one after another, of several great houses in close connection with my own, not only

severely tried my credit, but left me for a moment on the brink of ruin. Yes, Frederick, I rose one wretched morning, feeling that there was not a hair's breadth between me and the gazette, when, (but not till then, I swear it, Frederick), your uncle's funded property rushed into my mind."

"Father!" cried the horror stricken Frederick; cold sweat breaking from his forehead, at the bare apprehension of what might be coming next. Mr. Sutherland himself was obliged to pause, to wipe the drops from his brow, ere he could muster courage to proceed.

"I persuaded myself there could be neither wrong nor danger, in the course which necessity was prompting me to pursue—that if your uncle had been on the spot, he would have authorised me to do it—that as I should always be careful to pay him the same interest he had received before, he would be none the worse for the abstraction of the money, while you whom he had constituted his heir, would profit more by such a disposition of your inheritance, than if double the income should devolve upon you at his death.

Over and over again I argued the matter with myself. I put the transaction in every possible point of view, it was capable of being placed in. I weighed the real advantages of the scheme against the possible dictum of those who ever love to prove their own integrity, by setting a slur upon their neighbours, and, (for I still maintain, that you being his heir, there was no real dishonesty in the case,) I ended just as I had begun, by feeling that mine was a position so out of all ordinary rule, that no ordinary rule could touch it. And so, Frederick—and so—" continued the man, his voice sinking to a hoarse whisper, as he concluded his revelation: "I did that, at last, which six months before, I thought neither heaven nor earth could have compelled me to do. I forged a power of attorney—withdrawn the fortune of a Nabob from the funds—and saved the bank."

"And you cannot now replace it?" Frederick rather groaned, than could be said to have asked.

"Not now; I may to-morrow or (if I hold out so long) I may not for years. At first I had expected to be able to do so in a couple of months

at the outside, by means of my French railway shares, which at that time were promising complete success; but just then came the revolution, and ruin stared in the face all who had dipped any way deeply in the speculations of that country. I, indeed, managed to weather, but only just to weather the storm, and I am still so much crippled and embarrassed from its effects, that even if this accursed debt were out of the question altogether, the bank is still in danger, and nothing but the speedy, and, I am afraid, unlikely success of some monster American speculations can save it from the fate, which has fallen upon so many others already! And now I have told you all, and you may guess the horror that has been over me for months, depriving night of its rest, and day of its tranquillity; making me callous to the death of my sister—hardened to the fate of Lily—careless of everything or creature, save yourself; you who were so ready to betray me! I have told you all. I have kept back nothing. I have humbled myself before you as never father humbled himself before to the most dutiful of sons. And

now it only remains for you to save me, or cast the stone that sinks me for ever to the bottom!"

A cry of agony almost burst from Frederick's lips, as he caught the drift of his father's speech.

"What can I do, father? Father, what would you have me do?"

"Have you heard me, and do you ask it?" said the other coldly. "Frederick! had you loved me with half the love I have lavished upon you, you would not only have rescinded on the spot the resolution which brought you hither, but spontaneously, and without any prompting, you would have offered to join me in such measures for the safe keeping of that accursed brat, as would have put it out of her power, or her guardians, to molest me for the future."

"And even if I did this," said Frederick, faintly: "How would it save you, father? Surely the other guardian has a right, and will claim it, too, to examine into the affairs of the missing heiress; and thus, though she never were to appear again, your share in this wretched business would be made patent to the world."

"He cannot—he cannot!" cried Mr. Sutherland in a sudden burst of unholy exultation. "Her old idiot of a father has provided too well for the success of any fraud practised against her. Possibly he had some scruple for the way in which he had contrived to jockey us out of our rights, for both in the letter written on his death-bed, and a copy of the will which I have since received, he has made every possible provision to ease off the ugly business of refunding from my shoulders. By jove! Frederick; he has actually made it compulsory on both mother and guardian to produce the child, in order to prove their right to call me to account! He seems to have been afraid of some *mariage de convenance* among his wife's French relatives, (there are hoards of proud beggars I fancy connected with her); and he thought to guard against the danger of his child's being detained in India, for the purpose, by this proviso, which is so worded that I defy any court in England to give it against me, if the thing came to a trial. So you see, my son, I have got her, and it only remains with you to let me keep her to escape all consequences past,

present, and to come, of that act to which circumstances all but forced me."

"And it was after receiving my uncle's letter that you went to Paris?"

"It was. Ruin, and worse than ruin was staring in me in the face, and I was mad. I must have been, or I never would have burnt her marriage certificate before her face, and dared her to prove that I had done so. It was in the very climax of the first *emeute*, and in the midst of her prayers and lamentations, some of the mob rushed into her apartments. That finished the business, one nail drove out another; and in a paroxysm of childish fear she suffered me, her declared and mortal enemy, to lead her from the comparative safety of her own hotel into the very jaws of danger—the struggle of life and death going on at the barricades."

"But you didn't, you couldn't," cried Frederick; something in the look and expression of his father, suggesting the horrible idea of murder, done under cover of other similar deeds, on that day of bloodshed and indiscriminate revenge.

"I did nothing," cried Mr. Sutherland gnashing his teeth with a look of fierce and baffled vengeance; "I could have done everything, and I did nothing. The game was in my own hands, the child in my power for life or death, when a maudlin dislike to murder seized me, and instead of dashing her to the ground, where the next move of the crowd, would have done all the ugly part of the business for me, I must needs carry her safe out of the hubbub, and bring her back to England; as if forsooth she was not the only human being on earth, whose death could benefit, or whose life could bring down ruin on my own."

Mr. Sutherland shook his clenched hand in the air as he finished speaking, with such a look of malignant fury, that Frederick involuntarily recoiled; and his false conscience, (a commodity which his original uncertainty of principle, combined with the less doubtful deeds of his late career, had constituted into a very available possession to him;) his false conscience instantly began to whisper that it would probably be an act of far greater mercy both to mother and child, to

conceal the latter for a time, even at the expense of her birthright, than by any premature attempt at rescue, to expose her to the vengeance of one, whose passions were so violent, and who in this instance at least, had such overwhelming motives for their indulgence.

It was but a whisper yet, however; and when he spoke again, it was as if he had either not heard the tempter's voice at all, or had rejected its suggestions.

"But why bring her to England? Surely, without the cruelty of abandoning her to the mob, you might have left her in some safer place in Paris, and yet run little risk of her being discovered by any one who had an interest in the matter."

"She would have been with her mother at this moment if I had, or, admitting that the woman had been killed in the affray, still it was well known in India that Paris was her destination; consequently, all enquiries from thence would naturally have been directed towards that city. For this reason and another, I thought it best to bring her to London, where I could place

her with those who were bound by motives of self-interest (the only ones in which I have much faith) to do my bidding at any hazard to themselves."

Mr. Sutherland paused, and cast a look so full of meaning on his son, that even through the dim twilight of the evening, it appealed more terribly to his soul than any spoken accusation could have done.

He grew deadly pale, and a cold sweat broke upon his brow, while in a lower voice, but one, each tone of which went like a knife through his listener's heart, Mr. Sutherland went on :

"One of the men of whom I speak had been a confidential clerk in a well known city bank, and on a certain night in January, some twelve months since, or more, he absconded, taking with him a large sum of money, which had been paid in that very afternoon, and which has never been entirely recovered since."

"Father!"

The word burst almost unconsciously from Frederick's lips, but Mr. Sutherland proceeded as if he had not heard it.

"The chief amount of money thus abstracted was in gold, but there was a considerable quantity in bank notes also, and some of these were traced to a gambling house in the city, where they had been paid away for debts of honor previously contracted by a youth, whose name indeed could not be ascertained, but the description of whose person answered in every respect to that of the eldest son of the proprietor of the bank."

"Father!"

The word died in an inarticulate murmur upon Frederick's lips, and Mr. Sutherland again went on:

"For the sake of that most guilty one, the lesser villain of the two was spared. The proceedings were quashed, the son was left at liberty to go where he would, and the man whom he had debauched into the robbery of his own father, has ever since remained in such abject terror of discovery, that there is no deed, however deadly, he would not undertake in order to escape it."

"Father! then you know all?" groaned Frederick from between his whitened lips.

"Frederick, I know all, and have forgiven all. And now the ignominy which I have spared you, does it seem too much to ask that you, in turn, should spare to your own father?"

"No! no!" he groaned. "But oh, father, if it were anything but that—"

"Aye, of course," Mr. Sutherland bitterly responded. "Anything but that! Anything but that which is alone capable of saving your father from a felon's doom!"

"Father, father, say no more! I will do anything you please," cried Frederick, wholly conquered and overcome by a sense of his own overwhelming guilt, and his father's generous forbearance.

"My son, I thank you," Mr. Sutherland was beginning eagerly, but Frederick coldly withdrew his hand. His heart recoiled from the caresses of the man who, if there were any truth in nature, ought to have strained every nerve to save him from further sin; and who, instead had scrupled not, for the sake of his own selfish safety, to urge him to a deed which would set the seal upon his ruin, by involving him in a crime of

greater legal magnitude than any by which he hitherto had disgraced his station.

"Only say what I am to do, and I will do it," he passionately exclaimed. "But spare me your thanks, father, if you would not have me go mad and strike you!"

"There is really nothing for you to do; or, at least, very little," Mr. Sutherland, judiciously passing over the last part of his son's speech, replied soothingly: "You are under promise, you say, to obtain the recovery of this child?"

"I was to have met a person for that purpose this very evening, sir," Frederick answered in a husky voice; as Evelyn and her fruitless watch that night occurred to his recollections.

Mr. Sutherland looked as if he longed to know who the individual might be who was thus engaged in the plot against him; but he was afraid of pushing his son too far, so he only answered:

"That is easily arranged. You have but to forget your appointment, and by to-morrow evening, you will, I trust, be so far away, that it will be in the power of no one to twit you with your loss of memory."

"Where do you mean to send me?" Frederick asked in all the listlessness of despair.

"To California. I have a ship freighted for San Francisco, which only waits my orders to set sail. Go back quietly to the Red House; at ten o'clock this evening, a post-chaise and four shall be waiting on the road, at the back of the house, to bring you to — station. There you can pick up the night train to Southampton, and the 'Fire Fly' will start the instant that you set foot upon her deck."

"And the child, sir?" said Frederick, suddenly confronting his father, and for the first time that night looking him full in the face: "What are your intentions with regard to the child?"

"She shall go with you," said Mr. Sutherland irresolutely.

"Very well," replied Frederick. "And what am I to do with her when I reach my destination? California is a rude place I fancy for a creature of her tender nurture."

"Perhaps she may never reach it," said Mr. Sutherland, with a certain affectation of carelessness in his manner; albeit, his half-closed eyes

were fixed watchfully on his son. "She is of tender nurture, as you say, and to such the sea proves sometimes fatal."

"I will take what care of her I can," said Frederick, with a marked emphasis on the word. "She shall not be out of my sight night or day if I can help it, during the whole of the voyage, and after—"

"As you please," said his father coldly. "I only hope you may not grow weary of your charge."

"There is little danger of it," the other as coldly replied. "And now, sir, if you have no more to say, I suppose we had best part here?"

"There is nothing more to say, except—except—oh, my son! my son!" cried the miserable man, yielding to an uncontrollable burst of emotion, and flinging himself into his son's arms. But there was no answering emotion—no throb of returning affection in the heart to which he made this pitiful appeal. The love which up to this moment, the erring son had ceased not to cherish for his father, expired on the very in-

stant, when that father used his influence to pervert instead of to save. It was quenched and cold forever now; and silently extricating himself from his father's embrace, Frederick turned without another word of tenderness or adieu, and walked away. Shame, anger, sorrow, a thousand contending feelings and affections kept Mr. Sutherland rooted to the spot long after his son was out of sight; but at last the strong instinct of self-preservation became uppermost again, and he muttered to himself: "It will never do to trust him! His cursed conscience, or feelings, or whatever he is pleased to term it, will have the upper hand before he is half-way to Southampton; and in such a mood, he is quite capable of returning and delivering the brat to those with whom he has been leagued! I must try other measures, other men—ah!" he added, a fierce smile lighting up his features, as the tall gaunt form of Nightshade appeared in the distance toiling up the hill: "The devil is always ready in person, or by his agents to help a man to hell!"

## CHAPTER IX.

NEARLY an hour after the events which we have recorded in our last chapter, Evelyn de Burghe came in from a long walk on the common, and flinging her bonnet on the hall table as she passed, entered the drawing-room, with a face on which joy and anxiety were visibly contending. With the exception of Mr. Sutherland, all the party were already there, and gloomy enough they looked, as each in their several ways they tried to wile away the weary half-hour, which was still to precede the announcement of dinner. Wyllie held a book which, now by the dim twilight at the window, now by the faint flickering

of the fire, he was straining his vision to decipher. The Doctor was plunged among the advertisements of the *Times*, which he deluded himself into believing he had not examined in the morning. And Frank, who, since his mother's death, had resumed his former residence at the villa, was leaning against the mantelpiece, in a depth and intensity of reverie, which scorned even to mask itself under the pretence of occupation. No wonder all three looked up with a sudden sense of relief as Evelyn's bright face appeared, or that the doctor joyously exclaimed :

“ Come hither, sun beam ! and give us a dash of your brightness, for we have been living ‘under the cold shade,’ ever since you left us. Men are such dullards when they are left alone—regular brutes in fact, without the civilizing influence of dear womankind ; and I would engage to snuff out a mere man’s room anywhere, solely by the combination of tobacco fumes and shoe leather, which its atmosphere would infallibly present.”

“ Wonderful then, my dear sir,” cried Evelyn cheerfully, “ that all this time you should have

condemned yourself to such a life, and such an atmosphere, by persisting in the unblest state of bachelorism."

"He was waiting for you, Evelyn," cried Wyllie from the window. "He told me so this morning."

"Traitor," cried the doctor with a frown that caused his thick brows to meet. "Is that the way you keep my secrets? See, if I don't have it out with you for that to-morrow, but in the mean time, my dear 'future,' wherefore do you look so sparkling?"

"Because, my dear *passé*," replied Evelyn with wicked emphasis on the latter word, which caused the doctor to frown more intensely than ever: "because, my dear *passé*, I trust that I begin to see my way towards the deliverance of this poor child; for even supposing Frederick should fail, as you seemed to think possible this morning, Esther tells me, she thinks another person, whom she calls her father, would be willing to assist us."

"First sit down," said Frank, leading her to the fire, with a mingling of love and reverence

in his manner, which had never left it, since the death of Lily. From that day, in fact, he had quite abandoned his old habit of sparring, half in joke and half in earnest, with her; and Wyllie, for one, was quite of opinion, that they were not nearly such good company, in consequence, to those about them, as they had been in the days of old. Perhaps, at any other time, Evelyn herself might have been of the same opinion; but just now she felt soothed in her natural sadness, by a bearing which told more of the love and gratitude Frank was feeling towards her, for all that she had been to his young sister, than the utmost eloquence of words could possibly have done. The love and gratitude of such a heart as his, was not a tribute to be rejected lightly; least of all, by one like Evelyn, whose own depth of feeling eminently qualified her to appreciate his.

“First sit down, dear Evelyn, and while you warm yourself, you can tell us at your leisure, in what manner Esther hopes to accomplish this.”

“Humph!” grunted the doctor. “It needs

no ghost to tell us that, master dull head—catch a Saxon doing anything for nothing! Of course, if Queen Esther hopes to influence this man, it will be for a consideration out of Evelyn's pocket."

"Of course," said Evelyn quietly. "It is the only way—but I dare say they will ask nothing, that I cannot cheerfully afford to give."

"Of course not. Of course not," responded the doctor discontentedly. "Five hundred pounds to one man—two hundred perhaps to another—miserable trifles these, no doubt, to ladies who, like damsels in fairy tales, never speak without pearls and diamonds dropping out of their mouths."

"The pearls of wisdom and diamonds of mother-wit," retorted Frank with a faint smile. "Your fairy lore, which by-the-way has always some great moral stowed away beneath its tinsel, is realised in Evelyn."

"Frank defending Evy! If that isn't good!" exclaimed Wyllie, jumping out of his chair in a paroxysm of wonder at this most astonishing occurrence.

"Aye, indeed! What next I wonder!" cried

the doctor. " We shall have him down upon his marrow-bones proposing to her soon! But if it ever should come to that, Sir Frank, I think it only right to warn you before hand, that there will be no end to the confusion I mean to bring about your ears for interfering with my prospects."

Evelyn lifted her clear eyes to Frank's, and was met by a look as unclouded as her own. They understood each other so thoroughly that even the broad jokes of the doctor who always felt slightly injured, that he had not succeeded in getting up a little love-making between parties so beautifully situated for the tender passion, could not elicit a look of embarrassment on one side, or a blush upon the other. The glance which passed between them on the present occasion, was not lost upon his penetration, and he responded to it by a grunt of anything but satisfaction.

" I don't know I am sure what you young men are made of now-a-days; but when I was your age, I should have been all in a white heat by this time, master Frank, that I can tell you."

"But as you confess yourself to be past such folly now," replied Evelyn; "suppose, my dear sir, that we move the order of the day, and that your petition against Frank be allowed for the present to lay upon the table."

"With all my heart," replied the old gentleman, good humourelly. "He is a recreant knight, and will come to grief some day, I am certain, by plunging into matrimony with his housekeeper or cook; see if he does not, Miss Evelyn, and then you will have your revenge. But about Queen Esther. Has she made any arrangements likely to produce tangible results?"

"Not yet," said Evelyn. "But I think we are on the right track. Her chief business with me this evening was a message from Frederick, who has appointed another place to meet me, a little further in the copse wood."

"Further in the copse wood! What is that for now, I wonder?" said the doctor.

"He fancied we might be seen from the road, at the place he first appointed. But it will be only a few yards further in the wood, so of course I promised I would go."

"You shall break your promise then, by Jove you shall!" said the doctor, taking what Wyllie was wont to call one of his positive pinches of snuff. "Go alone into that copse wood at ten o'clock at night! And pray who is to warrant us that Miss Esther herself is not in a plot to betray you?"

"Who indeed?" Frank instantly chimed in. "To trust implicitly to a girl like that, Evelyn; nothing on earth can justify such folly."

"Indeed, Frank, you are hard upon poor Esther. Surely, surely, sir," said Evelyn, turning her appealing glances towards the doctor. "Surely it is impossible to look into Esther's earnest eyes, and to doubt of her desire to be honest."

"As if I knew anything of eyes, or of their language!" the doctor growled discontentedly in answer to this appeal.

"But you do know something of Esther, sir?" urged Evelyn; "for I remember your once saying, that with such a down-right, earnest glance as hers, it was hard to believe nature had not meant her to be honest."

"For all that it would be madness to trust her," observed Frank. "The companion of thieves—a thief, perhaps herself; at all events, accustomed to all sorts of trickeries; and without any defined ideas of right or wrong—of falsehood or of truth."

"On the contrary," Evelyn rather vehemently responded. "I think Esther has very strong ideas of right and wrong, and perhaps they are all the stronger that they have come upon her at an age when she is able by experience to decide on their relative value."

"My dear young lady," said the doctor kindly : "Believe me, I neither want, nor mean, to say a word against your protégée, for I hate, as much as you can do, that sort of suspicious virtue which will never credit the reformation of a sinner. Nevertheless, we must not forget, that this poor Queen Esther is evidently only one of many—that the mysterious message which she brought you, have may not come direct from Frederick, and that she herself may be the dupe of some designer, who with twenty men at his back (as the song has it), 'good men and tall,' may intend to

take you captive, like a fair and lovely princess as you are, and so compel you to consent to any terms it may please them to impose for the restoration of this child."

At that moment, Evelyn recollected that Esther had distinctly told her, she had not seen Frederick himself, but that his message had been sent to her through another; and though the very fact of this frank acknowledgment strengthened her own convictions as to the honesty of the girl, she felt it might also add weight to the opinion, that she was the dupe of others. Not very wisely, therefore, she suppressed the circumstance altogether, and merely endeavoured to laugh off the doctor's argument, by saying:

"Nothing hazard, nothing have, good people! Therefore, I pray you all be silent, since like any other errant damsel of fairy lore, I am bent upon trying the adventure."

"Evelyn," said Frank, commencing a hurried walk up and down the room, his usual method when much excited: "You told me once, that my fault was pride, and now I feel tempted to retort, and say, that obstinacy is yours."

“Thank Heaven that you think it!” cried the doctor piously. “Only yesterday, I was beginning to fear she might prove at last, ‘that faultless monster which the world ne’er saw;’ in which case I should have felt bound to hate her—but as you consider her obstinate and proud, I am ‘quits for the fear,’ as our friends on the Irish side of the channel would certainly translate it.”

“I said obstinate, doctor—not proud.”

“And I say it’s all one, sir Frank. Obstinate is only another form of pride, or at all events, the two are inseparable companions. You are proud, therefore you are obstinate, and *vice versa*, Miss Evelyn is obstinate, therefore, she is proud.”

“Thank you for both of us, doctor. But after all, Evelyn,” continued Frank, “are you so certain that your courage will not fail you. Consider for a moment, if this were a ruse—if Frederick should not be there, and some of his ruffianly associates should! A moment’s hesitation—a single sign of fear or faltering might rouse their cowardly fears of being betrayed,

and tempt them to violence, or perhaps to murder."

"Frank," replied Evelyn, fixing her full, firm eyes upon him. "I do feel certain, that I shall not fail; and for this simple reason, that I am not confiding in my own natural courage in the business at all. If I considered only *that*, certainly I should not venture out of the house to night; but when I remember, that I am not only going to snatch an innocent child from the grasp of russians, but to aid my own dear brother in a deed, which will enable him, I trust, to lift up his head among honourable men once more; and to walk in the paths of virtue; when I remember this, I feel I shall go in a courage not my own, but springing from the certain faith I have within me, that God, who has put this work upon me, will bear me in safety through it."

"Evelyn," said Frank, for only answer pausing suddenly in his walk, and gazing full upon her face: "Evelyn, you are a noble creature!"

"Devil a doubt of it," observed the doctor. "I always told you so, sir Frank, though you

wouldn't believe me, until now, when, for all practical purposes, the discovery comes too late. But to return to the main point; surely it would be a doubting of Providence, to suppose that an enterprise undertaken in such a spirit, and for such a motive could prove otherwise than most successful!"

But Frank only shook his head—like any other rational man, he was fully alive to the risks of the proposed expedition, while the idea of an especial Providence did not come sufficiently home to his feelings to make a balance in its favor.

"Evelyn would be a good type of a Judith I admit," he said, after an uncomfortable pause. "But it does not follow that we are therefore justified in sending her to the tent of Holofernes."

"Judith took a maid," cried the doctor suddenly. "And now I think of it, Miss Evelyn, I should have no objection to the situation, if you would only lend me a gown and shawl to fit me for its duties."

"It wouldn't reach as far as your knees," said

Wyllie, looking up anxiously from his book.  
“Evelyn is as tall as any woman, but you are a head and shoulders taller.”

“Wyllie is quite right,” said Evelyn, smiling. “You would astonish any wayfarer on the heath quite as much as Prince Charlie did the canny Scotsman, by the way in which he regulated his feminine attire. Therefore, my dear doctor, if I am to have a maid at all, (and I suppose I must, to satisfy your worship,) it shall be my own good Honor, and no one else shall be the guardian of my fortunes.”

“And how do you know Honor will like the job?” asked Frank, impatiently. “She is afraid of her own shadow by day-light, and I don’t think the substitution of moon-shine will tend much to the bracing of her nerves.”

“Aye, indeed,” the doctor grunted, “with the comfortable prospect in addition, of the head of Holofernes, or some other ‘most rare monster,’ to be afterwards wrapt up in her paisley shawl, and carried across the heath in triumph.”

“I hope not to be obliged to burthen her with any such gory trophy,” said Evelyn, smiling.

" And though Honor is certainly no heroine, she is still, I think, so much attached to me, that she would not willingly leave me to face danger by myself, if she could help it by coming with me."

" Ah! you hope to lead her by the infections, as Mrs. Malaprop would have it," replied the doctor. " But the infections, let me tell you, Miss Evelyn, are ticklesome things to deal with, and very apt to fail you too, at the precise moment when you might receive benefit from their existence."

" You judge from your own experience, no doubt, doctor," replied Evelyn, with a wicked smile. " But mine has led me to a different conclusion; and I am sure there is no more reliable affection in the world, than that which one true hearted woman entertains sometimes (though not very often I acknowledge) for another."

" Well, time will tell, Miss Evelyn. Only if Honor should chance to lead you a wild-goose chase across the common, fleeing from her own shadow, never you say that you had no warning. A word in your ear, Frank. But come into the

bay window first, man, or the womankind will be sure to catch it ere it fall."

"Evelyn is the only woman here, doctor," cried Wyllie, in an affronted tone. "You talk as if you thought that I was a girl?"

"Not I, my son!" said the laughing doctor. "But Delilah as she is, I am much mistaken if you are the Sampson who could keep secrets from her. Your 'infections' would betray you. Frank, confound him, has no infections to be played upon, so I may confide in him with safety."

The doctor took Frank by the arm, and after a few minutes' whispered consultation with him, suddenly left the room. He was not absent more than ten minutes, however, and was returning with a look of school-boy mischief on his countenance when he ran right against Mr. Sutherland, who chanced to be crossing the hall at the same moment.

"A thousand pardons," he exclaimed. "But God bless my soul!" Dr. Spencer could not forbear adding, as he caught a glimpse of Mr. Sutherland's haggard features in the light of the

drawing-room lamp, which had just been set upon the table: " You are as pale as death, my dear sir. Surely you must be more hurt than I first imagined."

These words caused the other occupants of the apartment to look up, and Evelyn in particular, could not repress a shudder as she did so; for there was a depth of purpose and intensity of expression in Mr. Sutherland's eyes that filled her with a nameless fear.

He had seen his son—the fate of Aileen for good or bad, as far as he could control it, must then have been decided by that time, yet there was no look of relenting softness on his face; she thought on the contrary, that it wore an expression more cold and cruel than she had ever seen there before.

She trembled for Aileen. She trembled for Frederick also, lest he should have been persuaded from the path of justice, and she waited with a beating heart for Mr. Sutherland's first words, in hopes of detecting some indication of his disposition in them. But when, at last, he spoke, there was nothing in the cold calm tone,

either to point her suspicions, or appease them, and the words themselves were but a simple reply to the apologies of the doctor."

"The hall is so dark, that I did not even see you, as I crossed it, doctor. Why don't they light it earlier, Evelyn? I wish you would speak to Parker."

"In the mean time, my dear sir," observed Frank, "you really must be hurt—you can have no idea how pale you look."

Involuntarily Mr. Sutherland glanced towards the mirror, and started. It was indeed, as if he had seen his own ghost, so wan and ghastly was the face that met him there.

"Come! come!" cried the doctor, taking almost forcible possession of his wrist. "I gave the wound, so it is only fair I should provide the plaster. Why, how is this, my dear sir? Pulse at a hundred and twenty, if it beats at all. Surely our little accidental encounter cannot be answerable for the mischief?"

"No! no!" the other answered impatiently, withdrawing his hand. "It wasn't that, of course it wasn't. I came home ill from the

city. I have been ill all day, and am going to bed, so Evelyn, you must go to dinner without me, and I will send down to you for mine as soon as I am ready."

"Send for some dinner! Send for some poison, hadn't you better at once," growled the doctor. "Why, with that pulse and skin, (aye, that's it, the eye glittering and flashing like a maniac's), cold water, and a black dose are the very outside of what you should have in the way of a dinner, if you were a patient of mine."

"As I have not that honor, however," replied Mr. Sutherland stiffly, "you must excuse me, if I still persist in my first intentions. And tell Parker to send up a bottle of brandy at the same time," he added, turning back as he was leaving the room, and speaking to Evelyn, while he looked defiantly at the doctor.

"Brandy! Brandy! Why not spirits of wine, at once, pig head!" growled the doctor. "Well, well—give me women and babies to manage for patients—you can do what you please with them,

but your strong man is the d—l. He will neither yield to force nor to persuasion."

"Mr. Sutherland is far less sick than anxious," observed Evelyn, cheerfully. "Surely it is a good sign. If Frederick had yielded to his persuasions, he would have felt, and looked triumphant."

## CHAPTER X.

NOTHING more was seen of Mr. Sutherland that evening, and as soon as Evelyn left the drawing-room to prepare for her expedition, the doctor and Frank accompanied by Wyllie, who had by this time been admitted to their secret council, retired to the study. They had not been there many minutes before some one tapped gently for admittance, and almost immediately afterwards the door was opened, and just upon the threshold, as if hesitating to advance farther, stood the tall gaunt figure of a woman, or at all events of some one in the attire of a woman, though the petticoats scarcely descended below the knees, and

the ankles that were in consequence displayed, seemed of stouter and more muscular formation than it often falls to the lot even of an Irish washerwoman to boast of. An awkward attempt at a curtsey succeeded the first introduction of the stranger, and then from behind the thick veil, by which the face was concealed, came the strong voice and brogue of Denis saying :

“ If you plaize, Masther Frank, I thought it best to step in and show myself before I went to Miss Evelyn, just to see if I’d do or if there was anything to alter.”

“ Hush !” cried the doctor, first dragging Denis into the room, and then locking, and double locking the door behind him, which operation being accomplished to his satisfaction he returned, and master and man gazed intently on each other.

“ Will I do, sir? I wanted to know, because if I don’t, Honor said she could lend me a cloak that would transmogrify me into a woman altogether.”

“ Do, Denis? do ?” repeated the other, in a speculative manner. “ Yes, yes, I should say you

would altogether. But, God bless my soul, I had no idea you were so tall. Why you are short for a man rather, and yet you look a perfect monster in those petticoats."

"Deed then, I hadn't a notion myself of my own hoith," said Denis, complacently, "until Miss Honor made me look in the cheval glass as she calls it; and then, saving your presence, I hardly felt myself dacent; for them petticoats is a mile too short, and she made me rowl the other garments up to the knees for the sake of showing the white stockings, which she thought would be fem-in-ine, and genteel to look at."

"Now you mention it," said his master. "Your, a-hem—ankles do look rayther thick for a woman, and it almost strikes me that the other 'garments,' being darker, would be the most effectual disguise of the two. Sir Frank, what say you?"

"I say," replied Frank, with difficulty repressing a smile at the strange figure standing for judgment before him: "I say that, soot or snow, it will make little difference at this hour of the night; but Denis should keep his veil down,

for he appears to me to have at least a week's growth of beard upon his chin."

" Asking your pardon," cried Denis, eagerly, " It isn't the fault of the beard at all, but of them soft twill things round my face, that do make it seem rougher for the contrast. I seen the differ myself in a minute, and wanted to have them off; but Miss Honor said that no woman worth her salt would be seen without a bridle to her bonnet, though how they can stand the hate and worry, myself doesn't know, for I'm all in a parspiration with the way it tickles me already."

While Denis ran on thus in defence of his complexion, his master had gone down on his knees before him, and was very diligently employed in coaxing the short coming petticoat into as near an acquaintance with its owner's ankles as without injury to the material it could be made to arrive at.

" Never mind, Denis," he observed, as soon as he thought he had accomplished this object, and getting up, Dr. Spencer walked round and round his servant, eyeing him intently as if he had been some rare and precious monster, and taking

an unlimited quantity of snuff the while, in order to assist his judgment.

" You will do well, very well, Denis—very well, indeed," he repeated complacently. " Only as Mr. Montgomerie observes, it will be safer to keep down your veil; and remember to walk short like a woman, whatever you do, or Miss Evelyn will find you out, before you've been a minute behind her."

" Honor wanted to tache me to curtshy," said Denis; "but the never a bit could I do it, though she kept me bobbing up and down, like a cork in rough wather, for more than ten minutes fornint the cheval glass."

" Well, well, Miss Evelyn won't want you to 'curtshy,'" said his master impatiently. " Have you thought of taking a pair of pistols with you, for I should say they were much more likely to be in request than 'curtshies?'"

" Ah, then, what sort of a boy do you think me, at all, to forget them!" Denis answered reproachfully.—" Sure, didn't I even borry Miss Honor's own muff as an excuse to consale them."

" Quite right. Quite right," replied his mas-

ter. "But, beware of using them without positive necessity, Denis!"

"Perhaps a good black thorn would be a more desirable weapon for him," said Frank. "We shall be so close behind, that he will hardly want fire-arms, and he might be rash in using them, if he had them."

"Deed, then, and I shouldn't wonder if I would," Denis answered composedly. "A pistol always goes off some how in my hands, like a popgun, and my heart warrms to the black thorn, besides, by rayson of its reminding me of ould times. But how will I hide it, Masther Frank, for it would be as much as Honor's place is worth, poor girril, if Miss Evelyn cotched her with a shileagh at her back?"

"Take this umbrella," said Frank. "It may be wanted, you know, if it rains, and as it is loaded with lead, it will be quite as efficient a weapon in case of emergency, as the strongest shileagh that ever did battle in Donny-brook fair."

"And a trifle stronger it is too," cried Denis, joyfully appropriating the article in question.

"Sure there's not a policeman in the city as has a stronger bludgeon nor this one! And now where will I find Miss Evelyn, for my mind misgives me, but she'll be getting impatient?"

"Hush, I hear her step in the hall," said the doctor. "Stay you here a moment, Denis, and I will start her on her travels before you."

"Have you seen Honor?" asked Evelyn, as she met the doctor emerging from the study. "They told me she went this way, but I cannot find her."

"She will be with you directly. Frank was speaking to her, I think, just now, but if you will walk on slowly, I will send her after you in a moment. Stay, I will open the back drawing-room window, and you can get out that way, it will be shorter than the hall door."

Evelyn followed him mechanically to the drawing-room, and there they parted, he returning to the study, to hurry the loitering steps of her attendant, while she pursued her way with eyes bent thoughtfully on the ground, and a spirit wrapt in reverie or prayer. It was nearly ten o'clock, as she stepped out of the shrubbery

gate, which opened on the common ; but the moon had not yet risen, and such of the stars as were already visible were wearily struggling for fair play through the masses of cloud that swept ever and anon over the face of Heaven.

Evelyn's certainly was a stouter heart than most women would have taken with them on such an expedition, yet it was too much of a woman's heart for all that, not to tremble a little also. Now she feared, lest even the straggling star-beams should betray her to some loiterer on the road. Then, on the contrary, she thought of the evil deeds that might be so easily done in darkness, and longed for a full burst of moon-light to chase all shadows from the common.

Pre-occupied by such thoughts and by the coming interview with her brother, it was some time before she perceived that Honor had not joined her, but at last she looked round and missing her from her side, paused a moment to allow her to come up. But when she stopped, Honor stopped as well, and when after a moment's hesitation she went on, Honor immediately fol-

lowed her example. Twice Evelyn repeated the manœuvre, and twice it was followed by the same result, and feeling at last a little provoked at such a fit of ill timed ceremony in one who had not hitherto been much accustomed to its observance, she paused and faced the loiterer, fully determined not to move another step until Honor should be at her side.

Then all at once it struck her that the figure upon which she impatiently fixed her eyes, loomed out from the dark back ground of the sky with an appearance of height and an attitude of soldierly attention, such as Honor, though a tall and stalwart looking maiden, could hardly have presented.

“Honor, is that you?” she asked in a voice that trembled in spite of all her efforts to prevent it; but no reply being given, with the sort of decision that was natural to her in moments of doubt and danger, she walked straight up to the silent figure.

The nearer she approached, however, the less of Honor could she discover in the form of the mysterious stranger, and probably she would

have yielded to the first womanly impulse which prompted her to fly, if a moment's reflection had not convinced her, that flight in such a case would only precipitate the danger, and that the sole chance of safety left her would be found in the assumption of a courage she was far from feeling.

Quickening her pace, therefore, instead of slackening it, she never paused again until she found herself standing face to face with the object of her dread. But this fact only added to her perplexity and wonder. It was Honor, and yet it was not. The bonnet and shawl were surely hers, but the portentous display of stout legs and white stockings beneath petticoats much too short to hide them, was a thing of which under no circumstances whatsoever could Honor, who was particularly neat and proper about her person, have possibly been guilty. Evelyn at once conceived herself to be the victim of some treachery, but still she mustered courage to exclaim :

“ Speak, Honor, if that is you, or I shall go mad with fear !”

“ Musha ! may the devil fly away with me

altogether, before that should happen to you, you darlint of the worreld," said a deep voice, which not even the thick foldings of the veil through which it reached the ears of Evelyn could divest of its native roughness, "but sure it's jokin' you must be, Miss Evelyn, to be frightened at your own body sarvant come to guard you acrass the common."

Truly the skin was the skin of Esau, but the voice was the voice of Jacob.

"Denis!" cried Evelyn, the truth flashing across her mind at once, and feeling, it must be confessed, considerably relieved by the discovery, "Denis, Denis, what madness brings you here?"

"Deed then, Miss Evelyn, no madness at all, but just my own good legs it was that brought me, and mighty unaisy they feel moreover, by rayson of Miss Honor's thingummies being a mile too short, and the burrs (bad cess to them) able to get at the calves just where they ought to be under the protection of the inexpressibles, saving your presence for using the word."

While he was holding this parley Denis seized the favourable moment to guard himself against

future annoyance of the kind he complained of, by a different and more commodious arrangement of his nether garments; nor was it until he had completed this change to his own satisfaction, that he found leisure to attend to Miss Evelyn's impatiently repeated—

“ Denis, Denis, what evil spirit prompted you to this? Didn’t you know that I promised Esther to bring no one with me but Honor.”

“ And aren’t you bringin’ Honor, Miss?” Denis quietly responded. “ Leastways, aren’t you bringing her bonnet and shawl, and fine satin gown, and if that isn’t the best part of a woman, isn’t it anyhow the part that she thinks most of, herself?”

“ I cannot smile, Denis,” Evelyn impatiently responded. “ You meant well in coming, I am certain, but it is a breach of faith—a want of trust in the love and honor of my brother, which I fear he will resent deeply.”

“ Ah, then, how you do be talkin’, Miss Evelyn,” he retorted with a shrug. “ And afther all what want of trust will it be when I am able to kiss my thumb on it that the whole thing

was settled between me and the masther unknownst to you, and that you are as innocent of the little deceipt as the babe that never was born."

"It is of little consequence who contrived it, Denis; the fact is still the same, that I promised to bring Honor and none but Honor."

"And if I find it convenient to answer to the name?" said Denis; "only show me the man that daures to say a word aginst it, that's all! He won't say it twiced I promise you, Miss Evelyn, as long as Denis M'Carthy is to the fore to prevent him."

"And after all," continued Evelyn, pursuing her own train of thought without paying much attention to the interjaculatory remarks of her attendant, "if mischief really were intended, you could be of no earthly use in that dress, which makes you as helpless almost as a woman."

"Ough, does it though?" replied Denis, in an affronted tone, and with a light flourish of the umbrella that was not lost upon Evelyn. "Only let them thry it then, and see if I don't make

some of 'em skip like Jimcrows notwithstanding the petticoats."

"Nay, I am much more afraid of your fighting than of your running away," she replied in a soothing tone. "There is no saying what mischief and danger might not result from a quarrel; danger not only to the child I am seeking to save, but to me and Frederick, and every one else in short, mixed up in the business."

"Ah, never fear for that, Miss Evelyn! Sure I'm as quite as a lamb when I amn't roused, and sorra blow I'll sthrike this evening, unless they attimpt to murdher you outright. You wouldn't have me stand by and see that I suppose without raising a jolly good shindy about it; and now hadn't we betther push on at wanst, for masther Frederick was always a little bit like a wild horse in a stable you know, and may be if we keep him waiting much longer, he'll go off to them Roosians again, without laving a line to say where we may find him to-morrow."

There was too much probability in this suggestion to allow of Evelyn's hesitating any longer; and not perhaps sorry in her heart for the mental

and bodily support which the presence of Denis gave her, she took his arm at once, and again moved briskly forward. A quarter of an hour's walking brought them to the copse-wood indicated by Frederick. It had been Evelyn's original intention to meet him nearly on the outside, but the message which Esther had brought that night having changed this plan, she proceeded with Denis into the very thickest of its shadows. Further and further still they forced their way, the appointed meeting place being an old oak tree, which standing a little apart from any other, had been struck and partially destroyed by lightning. Until they reached this spot they did not even dare to whisper, lest other ears than those of Frederick, should become conscious of their presence; but it was further in the wood than Evelyn had at first imagined, and notwithstanding her reliance upon Esther, the idea of treachery certainly more than once crossed her mind, as each step deepened the shadows that she moved in. At last the under-wood began to grow less thickly, the path either ceased entirely, or was too much over run with

grass to be visible any longer; and the trees, dividing on either side, gave the trysting tree to view standing alone and desolate in the centre of the green sward. But Frederick was not there, and it was all in vain that Denis walked round and round, peering among the brush-wood, or that Evelyn ventured once or twice to call him softly by his name. He neither answered, nor appeared, and divided between the hope that he had not yet arrived, and the fear that he had come and gone already, Evelyn sat down at the foot of the tree to wait, while Denis climbed it like a cat, to try whether from a higher point of view he could discover the defaulter.

In this manner half an hour passed sorrowfully away, and Evelyn was beginning reluctantly to think of retracing her footsteps, when an exclamation from Denis, who was still perched among the branches caused her to cry out:

“What is it, Denis? What do you see yonder?”

“As nate a spicemen of a bonfire as ever I seen on a St. John’s Eve in ould Ireland,” he answered from above.

"A bonfire, but where, Denis?"

"It's a house, not perhaps a quarther of a mile from this. God help the craythures that's in it, for if they arn't out of it by this time, every mother's son of them will be burnt alive before morning; whew! what's that?" he cried peering from his post of observation as he heard a loud rustling in the brushwood.

It was a boy who rushed suddenly out of it, and almost tumbled over Evelyn in the haste with which he precipitated himself towards her.

"Esther sent me marm, she bid me say as Aileen is a dead kinchen if you don't bring help to her this minute."

"Treachery, treachery," cried Evelyn starting to her feet! "where is Frederick?"

"Gone! and Dick, and John, and t'other kinchen with 'em," cried the boy; "they locked her up in the garret, but dead or alive we carn't say rightly which, by rayson that we carn't get at her."

At that moment a jet of fire from the burning house shot up brightly into the skies, cast-

ing a lurid light even over the dark trees around them.

"Ha!" cried the boy with a yell of terror—"They've fired the roof, and the kinchen's done for."

There was no mistaking that cry of agony. Evelyn involuntarily sprang forward, and she would have rushed at once in the direction of the flames, if Denis had not dropped like a squirrel from the tree, and held her back with one hand while he sounded a long, shrill whistle on the little finger of the other.

The brushwood once more opened, and Frank and the doctor were at their side in a moment.

"Oh, thank God, thank God," cried Evelyn, "let us go at once, dear friends; she may yet be saved!"

"She carn't," said the boy, doggedly, "the garret is on fire, and five minutes of sich a conflaggeration as that would have burnt her into cinders like nothin'."

"We shall soon see that," said Frank, laying a strong hand on the boy's shoulder, "lead on, sirrah, and beware of treachery, if you don't want to be in jail before morning."

## CHAPTER XI.

AFTER Esther had parted from Evelyn that evening, she had to go into the city, on a commission, with which Dick Daredevil had charged her. It was a long walk, and she had been detained moreover, by the absence (real or pretended) of the person to whom she had been sent; so that it was more than half-past nine, when she found herself once more on the common, on her way to the Red house. Haunted by a suspicion, as to Dick's motives in sending her so far, she pressed eagerly forward, and the tall chimneys of the Red house were just visible, looming out darkly from a back ground of

clouds, which the moon irradiated here and there, with streaks of misty and uncertain light, when she thought she heard some one calling her by name, and directly afterward perceived a boy running rapidly towards her. It was ‘hurdy gurdy Bill,’ and he was so out of breath by the time he reached her, that he could only catch her by the hand, and exclaim in broken sentences: “ Make haste, carn’t you ! a precious mess you’ve made of it, by letting that ’ere Dick Daredevil come over you as he does.”

“Who is it—for God’s sake, who is it?” cried Esther, quickening her pace, till it became almost a run.

“Who is it indeed? Why, who should it be but that our three best coves have gone off in a chay and four, like bang up swells as they are, and that they’ve taken one of the kinchens with them.”

“ Which? Which?” cried Esther struggling for utterance.

“ The prig,” said Bill emphatically.

“ And Aileen?”

“ Esther,” cried the boy, almost as excited as

she was; "I carn't tell you nothin' wotever for sartin about her; but this I can say, that I've searched the ken from cellar to ceiling, and can find no trace of her, wotever—except—"

"Except wot?" Esther asked almost fiercely.

"Except this, that John's taken away the ladder that led to the loft, and dead or alive she's there for sartain."

The shriek with which Esther responded to this information, made the boy jump almost two feet from the ground.

"Fire! Fire!" she cried, pointing to the smoke which the moon was now bright enough to permit their seeing, issuing in puffs from an open window. "They've fired the house—the willyans! Bill!" she cried, turning round upon the boy, and clutching him wildly by the shoulder, "as you hopes for mercy in this life or the next, run as fast as if the beaks were at your heels, to the copse wood down below there. You'll find a lady, at the blasted oak; tell her to send up help at once, or that blessed little creetur will be a cinder 'ere it comes. Away, away, never you stop to stare so! If you waits but the

twinkling of an eye lid, you'll be too late to save her."

Comprehending in a moment both the emergency and the chance of rescue, the boy was off like a shot, and Esther rushed through the garden gate. But she had scarcely passed it, ere it was swung to once more, by some one close behind her, and fancying it was Bill who loitered, she turned to chide him for the delay. It was not Bill however, but Frederick Sutherland, whom her angry gaze encountered. He was deadly pale, and there were dark blood spots on his garments, but at the moment, she took no note of that, though afterwards it was well remembered. Just then she could only think of him as the betrayer of Aileen, and passionately exclaimed :—

"So you've come back to see how your handy work is prospering, have you? Why do you look up at that window, as if you never seed smoke before! You've done it! You know you have, but if so much as a hair of her precious head is injured, I'll hang every mother's son of you, before the month is over!"

"Esther," cried the young man, interrupting the torrent of her anger. "What do you mean? In God's name, where is Aileen?"

"Where? Where?" cried Esther, almost paralysed by fear and passion, and shaking her finger at the roof of the house, from which bright tongues of flame were beginning to shoot upwards. "Up there yonder, tied may be hand and foot, and quivering before the fiery death, that, man as you calls yourself, you could leave her to endure."

"Esther, I can't understand. What do you mean?" he asked fiercely and impatiently.

"What do I mean? What do I mean?" she cried, speaking as fast as ever she could utter the words. "What can I mean but this? That if you'd been a man, or half a man—if you'd been true to yourself for ten minutes only, a thing as you never were, and never will be, that ere innocent dove up stairs might have been safe and sound this minute, a sleepin' on her mother's bosom."

"Esther!" cried Frederick, violently: "I

can't stop here to bandy Billingsgate. Do you mean that Aileen is up yonder?"

"In the loft," she answered. "And the ladder's gone too; so without the wings of a bird there's no getting at her in time."

"It must be from the roof?" he questioned.

"But there is no ladder, and no time to fetch one," Esther answered in a bewildered tone; for the horror of Aileen's situation had, for an instant, confused her clear and dauntless intellect.

"Now, Esther, collect your thoughts," Frederick said, in a commanding voice, and taking the scarf-handkerchief which he had worn round his neck, he wound it as tight as he could round his waist. "Is there no other way by which we can get on to the roof? through the inside of the house I mean."

"The left wing," cried Esther, joyfully. "They may have forgotten the ladder there, and the fire has not reached it yet."

"Then, here goes to try!" cried Frederick, opening the hall door at once. A rush of smoke

almost smothered him as he did so, but he went on unheeding, closely followed by Esther, who had caught hold of his coat in order not to be separated from him. All the lower rooms were filled with smoke, though the flames had not yet reached them, a proof, if any were wanted, that the fire had begun elsewhere, and was probably not accidental. As they ascended the stairs, the atmosphere grew thicker and more stifling, while here and there long streaks of light flashing through the darkness showed that the conflagration was spreading very rapidly. They gained the loft at last! It seemed an age to Esther ere they did so. Happily the ladder staircase on this side had not been removed, but the door at the top was closed. "Locked!" cried Esther in despair; but no! with one dash of his foot, Frederick burst it open, and stept upon the roof. Even as he did so a faint shriek rang upon his ears, and he had yet the whole length of the house to traverse ere he could reach the spot from whence it came! "My God, she will be burnt to death before I reach her!" The thought passed quick as lightning through his brain, but

he had no time to speak it. On he went over the long ledge, which was his only way to the opposite wing, Esther still following close behind. The path was very narrow, and the parapet low, so low that at any other time she would have been giddy only for looking over. But now she had no thought to give it—all was swallowed up in the one tremendous fear lest Aileen should be dead ere rescue reached her. The distance was traversed safely, and they were at the window. There was no screaming now, but they could hear instead, the crackling of the flames as they darted to and fro amid the smoke that wrapt all other things within the room in darkness. Evidently, there was no time to lose, if indeed they were not too late already. Frederick dashed his foot against the casement, and jumped down. The leap was deeper than he had expected, and the shock, with the heat and smoke that met him below, had well nigh stunned him. Recovering himself by a violent effort, he looked round for Aileen. The middle of the room had been filled with wood and other combustibles, some of which happened to be damp, and this

circumstance, while it prevented the fire spreading as rapidly as it otherwise would have done, had filled the place with a smoke so thick and penetrating, that Frederick felt as if he must drop if he attempted to pass through it. "He meant to smoke her like a wasp's nest, and perhaps he has done it," was the thought passing through his mind, when another scream, thick and smothered as the heavy atmosphere it had to pass through, warned him she was living still.

The very madness of fear had in fact given her strength to burst the bonds by which she had been confined at first in such a manner, that the thickest of the flames would have enveloped her at once, and she had taken refuge behind a pile of logs, which, albeit they protected her for the moment, would, in a very short time, have proved her death doom. Her coarse woolen dress had so far been some protection, but it was already singed in many places, and thin snakes of fire were gliding and playing round her wooden rampart ready to light it into her funeral pyre.

They were not steady enough yet however to

make her visible, and Frederick plunged at a venture into the middle of the room. Just then the flames seized upon a dry log, not two yards from Aileen and in a moment it blazed up brightly. The light fell full upon her shrinking form. Frederick made one bound forward, caught her in his arms, and dashed back again to the open window. How it was done neither of the three could afterwards have recounted; but in a moment Aileen was in Esther's arms, and her deliverer making frantic efforts to swing himself up in a similar manner from the depths of the burning chamber.

In vain, in vain: his hands and face were blistered by the heat, his strength was failing rapidly—the light was fading from his eyes. Twice he caught hold of Esther's outstretched hand—and twice he was forced from mere exhaustion to let it go. A third time he tried it, but the dizziness came over him again—he could neither see nor hear—a cry escaped his lips, and he fell senseless on the floor.

Esther now gave him up for lost, but a ladder had by this time been placed against the wall

below and a man ran lightly up it, heard her ejaculation of horror, caught the direction of her straining eyes and leaped at once into the fiery gulf below. A moment afterwards and Frederick's insensible form was lifted, as though he had been an infant, to the casement, his deliverer reached the same spot at a single bound himself, and sitting down for a moment on the parapet, took the youth he had saved, tenderly in his arms. He was still alive; even in that brief, anxious moment Frank could perceive thus much, and a thrill of joy passed through him at the thought. But there was much yet to be done ere the life which he had so far preserved could be accounted out of danger. Neither was there time to lose, for the flames had begun to burst already through the windows of the garret, and in a very few minutes the place which they occupied would be also in a blaze.

"I can get down Aileen myself," said Esther, observing the doubtful expression of his eye, as he glanced from the child in her arms to the (to him) yet more precious burden he supported in his own.

Frank looked earnestly at the speaker, but there was no sign of quailing in the brave, bold eyes that returned his scrutiny.

"Are you quite certain?" he could not refrain from asking.

"Sartain," she added laconically, "and there's no time to lose about it."

"You must try it at all events," he answered; "for I dare not leave him thus alone. All right down there?" he cried, raising his voice so that it should be heard by those beneath him.

"All right," cried more than one strong voice below.

"Oh, Frank, for God's sake make haste," chimed in the soft, anxious tones of Evelyn.

"It's all right you sees," said Esther, "so just tie this shawl tightly round me, that way, to keep Aileen close, and leave one hand to hold by. There, now we'll be down in no time, lucky she is still unconscious."

It was lucky indeed, for the slightest movement on her part might have thrown Esther off her balance, in her perilous descent, but as it was, it was accomplished in safety, and a shout from

below conveyed the intelligence to Frank. He immediately prepared to follow with his burthen, and as he was of great strength and stature, and Frederick a mere stripling, he had little more trouble than Esther had experienced, ere he laid his charge safely, but still in a state of insensibility on the ground.

"He is dead! He is dead!" cried Evelyn, recognizing her brother in a moment, and kneeling on the ground beside him. "Oh, Frank, surely he is dead indeed!"

"No, Evelyn, not dead, though I fear terribly wounded, somehow!" Frank was beginning, when the doctor, who had been outside the circle which had already gathered round the pair, came bustling in, and seeing Evelyn bending over the prostrate form of some one, exclaimed, "Why, what's all this? Miss Evelyn on her knees to a young robber, and—but, Good God! Can it be possible? Frederick, and insensible! How in the name of every saint in the calendar, has this happened?"

"He saved Aileen's life," said Esther shortly,

and before any one else could answer; "we got up by the roof, and he jumped in, and threw her out. But whether he gave hisself a blow, or that the heat and smoke confused him, he fell back again, as he was trying to take the leap, and would never have come out alive, if it weren't for that gemman."

"Heat and smoke confused him," repeated the doctor, who during this explanation, had gone down on his knees to examine the patient. "I wish it may be only that, my girl, but he is terribly bruised and burnt, and his clothes are saturated with blood."

"I recollect now," said Esther quickly as she recalled her first meeting with Frederick in the garden. "There was blood on him, when I seed he first, and he was hurried like. I wish there mayn't have been even worser work nor this among them?"

"I wish there mayn't, indeed," said Bill, intruding himself unceremoniously into the midst of the group. "But it is high time for we to cut our luckie, Het, for the beaks are coming up

the hill with John, and your fancy man in tow. John's had his dish, I should say, for he staggers like a ship at sea."

"I won't stir," said Esther, resolutely resisting his effort to pull her out of the circle. "If Dick's in quod, they may take me too, for I'd as lief be in prison with he, as in the free without him."

"You're welcome to the choice," said Bill. "As for me, I'm off, for I carn't say as my acquaintance with that 'ere stone jug you talks of, has been of so pleasant a nature, as to make me at all desirous of renewing the connection."

Having said this much, Bill struck off without further parley in the direction of London, and Esther was just about to rush towards the spot, where he said he had seen the prisoners, when the doctor laid a detaining hand upon her arm, while he bade Frank go and ascertain the real facts of the case.

In compliance with this wish, the latter instantly went to the front of the house, where a little crowd had already assembled, and in the midst of them he found the prisoners and Jim

in the custody of a couple of policemen. The boy soon told his story. He had been wrapt by Nightshade in a bonnet and cloak belonging to Aileen, and thrust into the chaise in which Frederick was awaiting their arrival with Dick on the box. Nightshade got in after him, shut the door, and they started off at a gallop. They had not gone a quarter of a mile, however, ere Frederick discovered the cheat that had been put on him, in the person of Jim, and shouted to Dick who was driving to stop. Nightshade, on the other hand, commanded him to go on, but it was too late, for he had pulled up already, Frederick instantly jumped out of the chaise, John threw himself after him, and a scuffle ensued. It lasted but a second—enraged at being thus baulked of his chance of escape, John plunged a knife into the side of his antagonist, who drew a pistol, discharged it at him, and then staggered off in the direction of the Red House. The ball entered Nightshade's shoulder, but without wounding him severely, and still bent upon effecting his escape, he jumped into the chaise once more, and shouted to Dare-

devil to drive on. Horrified, however, at the ruffianly attempt on Frederick, Dick, instead of complying with his request dragged him by main force out of the carriage, and held him down until some persons attracted, first by the blaze at the Red House, and then by the cries of Jim, came up, helped him to secure the prisoner, and sent one of their number in search of a policeman. The latter, seeing John wounded and having only Dick's word for the manner of the occurrence, took both men prisoners, and moved off at once to the Red House, where Daredevil assured them they would find the man, whom his comrade had attempted to murder.

By the time Frank had made himself master of this intelligence, Esther having delivered Aileen to the care of Denis, was standing at his side, and weeping bitterly over Dick's captivity. "Oh, sir," she cried appealing in her distress to Frank. "They won't surely, they won't take Dick to prison. He hadn't nothing wotever to do with the business, I'm certain, for he never could a bear bloodshed, and were always at John to perwent him from violence!"

Frank glanced towards the policeman ; but that functionary shook his head ominously.

" I know the man well," he said, " and have been after him sometime, on account of a robbery. If he ain't guilty in the business, he is in some other you may depend upon it; and, at all events, nothing can be done, until we have taken the depositions of the wounded gent and this boy, who was a witness of the assault."

" Never mind," said Dick good naturedly, pitying the evident distress of Esther. " It's best as it is for you, Hetty ; for you war never so bad as your company, and if you gets into better now, may be you'll be able to lead a straight life for the future."

But Esther was only the more overcome by this good nature, and was vehemently repeating her protestations that she would never leave him, never—that she would follow him to prison whatever might happen, when Frank drew her a little aside and whispered, " Do you not see, my poor girl, that you will do him more harm than good by this identifying yourself with him? At present no suspicion attaches to you ; but if you

go on this way much longer, you will attract it, and thus be prevented from visiting him in his imprisonment."

"Yes, Hetty, go," said Dick, guessing the purport of Frank's whisper. "Remember, howsomdever, that I always had my misgivings for the way in which I was forced to treat the kinchen, and for the rest I calls all here to witness, that I had nothing whatever to say to the firing of the Red House, if so be as it was really fired o' purpose. That's a job for which John and them as set him on must answer for theirn'selves; and until I seed the scuffle in the chay, I could have taken any mortal oath that could be given, that Aileen were the kid inside. Leastways, they telled me so before we started; but it's no use saying no more at present," he added suddenly, recollecting himself. "So you just go along with that ere gent, Het, and say no more about it, or the beaks will get it into their silly heads may be to put you into quod as well as we."

"I don't care nothing at all if they do," responded the sobbing Esther. "Once you're

jugged, Dick, I care little enough what comes to I."

"Well, I cares if you don't," said Dick. "And, besides, you can be a precious sight more useful to me outside the jug than in. So go with the gent at once Het, and good bye, old gal, till we meet again."

This last argument was by far the most powerful that he could have chosen for the purpose. Esther suddenly remembered a number of little services she might render him if free, and taking advantage of her evident hesitation, Frank put the still insensible Aileen into her arms again, and led her gently towards the spot where Evelyn and the doctor were still occupied with Frederick. The latter was by this time beginning to revive, and it was touching to see the way in which he passed his eyes wistfully from one to another of the faces round him, until at last they became fixed, loving, and confiding, on that of Evelyn.

The doctor no sooner saw Frank approaching, than he went back a step to meet him. "The sooner we get him to the 'Ferns' the better," he

said in a half whisper. "I dare not leave him, even for a moment, but don't you think you could find me an old door, or something of the kind, on which he could be carried gently?"

"The Ferns. Yes! Yes!" Evelyn murmured softly. "Yes, yes—bring him to the Ferns, he will be better there."

Not for worlds would Doctor Spencer have grieved her then, by saying that Frederick would never be better again in this life, but perhaps his face said it for him, for Evelyn caught his hand, and added. "Yes, yes. I know it is all over with him. I knew it from the first—but oh, doctor, for a little time to repent, and repair the past! That is all I ask of God! All I dare hope you will be able to obtain!"

"We must hope and pray for it," said the kind old man, feeling indeed but little of the hope he spoke of. "In any case we must not forget that his last act was a good one. That he would not be lying there now, if he had not risked his life in expiation of the past."

"I know it. I am sure of it," she answered. "And even for that much, am grateful!"

She was interrupted by the appearance of the board on which Frank and Denis were preparing to carry the wounded man. The doctor felt his pulse, and caused the crowd which had gathered round them, to move a little further off; he evidently dreaded even the slight movement needed to place him on it, lest it should renew the internal hemorrhage that was killing him.

By this time, the whole place was as light as day, from the flames of the burning building, and there was not a face to be seen which was not filled with anxiety for the result of the experiment. It was done at last, as gently and dexterously as possible, by Frank and Dr. Spencer himself, but the exertion was too much for Frederick, and he fainted again.

"He is dying," cried the plaintive voice of Evelyn, as she knelt down beside him, in that strange mixture of strength and weakness, which natures such as hers combine, even in the hour of their deepest sorrow. "Doctor, he is dying."

"No, he has only fainted!" the doctor was too busy endeavouring to restore suspended animation to say more, and Evelyn was hardly con-

scious of the relief which his words had given 'ere looking up she beheld Mr. Sutherland at a few yards distance—rigid and motionless—his hands clasped—his face fearful to behold in its mingled expression of anguish and despair, as he gazed upon his son.

No one ever knew or guessed what it was that had brought him there. Whether he had seen the burning building from the Ferns, or had had a presentiment of coming evil—or a sudden movement of repentance. He never told, and no one ever dared to ask, but there, at any rate, he was, and for a moment Evelyn felt her soul recoil from him as from the murderer of her brother. But it was only for a moment. She remembered that he was the father of the dying youth, and signed him to approach. He almost seemed as if unconsciously to himself he had been waiting that permission, for instantly stepping forward, he knelt down by Frederick, just opposite the place she occupied, and Evelyn heard if no one else did the strong heart broken cry upon his lip, "My son, my son, I have killed my son!"

## CHAPTER XII.

THE very morning after the events we have recorded in our last chapter, a carriage stopped at the gate house of the Ferns, and a gentleman descending from it bade the driver remain where he was, while he proceeded to walk up the avenue himself. The stranger, for such he evidently was, to the person who opened the gate, was dressed in mourning, tall and handsome, but with an expression of deep thought, mingled with one of anxiety and eagerness stamped upon his brow. It was the look of one who had sorrowed deeply and yet had struggled with his sorrow, until he had mastered all it might otherwise

have contained of power to enervate the mind. The look of one upon whom hope had begun to dawn, but who still felt himself in the meshes of some mighty care, albeit holding the clue by which it was to be unraveled. A look it was, at once self confident yet not defiant; sad, yet not desponding; strong, yet with all the mildness that conscious strength bestows. A look, in fine, that if you were in sorrow would have lured you to seek his sympathy; if in perplexity, his counsel; if in danger, bodily or mental, his clear-sighted courage for escape or defence.

As he pursued his way up the avenue, his eyes were bent for the most part in moody meditation on the ground, though once or twice he raised them wistfully as if longing to see some one, but when he approached the house and the long line of closed shutters gave notice of the dead within, a yet deeper shadow fell upon his brow, and every indication of more hopeful feelings faded from his speaking features.

Even after he had ascended the steps of the mansion he lingered a moment ere he found courage to ring the bell, and when a footman

obeyed the summons, he at first seemed to have forgotten what he was going to say and then as if by a violent effort enquired if Miss de Burgh lived there.

"Yes, sir, no, sir," the man answered, with evident embarrassment, "that is to say she is particularly engaged this morning and can see no one."

"See her, I don't want to see her," the other answered vaguely, and then observing for the first time the servant's astonished look, he added in explanation, "I am an old friend and anxious to know how she is—that's all; my business is with Mr. Sutherland."

"Mr. Sutherland will not see you either, I am certain," said the servant, "so you had best leave your card, sir, for indeed I cannot disturb him an any account."

"But I *must* see him," said the stranger, gently but firmly, "I am sorry to be urgent out of season, but my business admits of no delay."

"Here is Mr. Montgomerie, and he will explain how impossible it is," said the man, gladly

devolving the decision on Frank, who hearing the voice of a stranger, and fearful of some new annoyance, had come into the hall to enquire his business.

"I only arrived last night from India," said the stranger turning at once to Frank, with the tone and manner of a most perfect gentleman, "and I need not say I would not force myself on Mr. Sutherland at any time (much less just now) without ample cause for the intrusion."

Any one from India at that particular moment might, Frank felt, be the bearer of most important tidings, so he motioned the stranger at once to follow while he preceded him to the door of his uncle's study to announce his arrival.

Mr. Sutherland was seated at his desk as calm apparently and self possessed as ever, though his face was almost livid in its whiteness. A couple of written documents lay open on the table before him, and the butler and bailiff were standing at his side.

"That will do, Simonds," he was saying to the latter as Frank opened the door, "you may retire now."

The man instantly and perhaps gladly availed himself of this congé, but Parker, an old and attached servant in the family, ventured to linger a moment longer while he murmured something which sounded almost like a remonstrance in his master's ear.

"Son, did you say? I have no son now, sir," Mr. Sutherland answered aloud and in a voice which some hidden combination of feeling rendered terrible.

"Master Wyllie?" urged the faithful fellow, though literally trembling before the storm that he felt he was invoking.

"He is a changeling," said the other shortly, "a changeling, and I disown him. Never name him to me again, sir, if you don't want your dismissal on the spot."

Thus admonished, Parker reluctantly retreated and Frank came forward in his turn. Though perfectly aware of his presence, Mr. Sutherland did not look up until he had folded and directed the documents on the table, one of which he then handed without saying a word to his nephew. The latter just glanced over the ad-

dress as he took it, and seeing it was labeled "not to be opened till after my death," put it into his pocket in silence, and moving a little on one side revealed the stranger standing in the open door-way. Up to that moment Mr. Sutherland had not had an idea of his presence, and he grew a shade paler if possible than he had before, while a strange mixture of fear and triumph lit up the eye that he fixed upon the intruder. Frank waited but that look of recognition to withdraw. He felt as if a whole world of guilt and detection were stereotyped in that glance, and he would not for millions have run the risk of hearing a syllable of that which it was not intended he should know, and which, if once he knew it, could never have been forgotten. The door was closed behind him, and still the pair whom he had left, remained gazing on each other, as if each were measuring the strength of each, and comparing it with his own.

Mr. Sutherland broke silence first:—

"Sir Walter St. Clair, I believe?" he observed, with a look of haughty endurance of the stranger's presence.

"The same," replied the other, with the dignified reserve demanded by the manner of his host; "and being the same, the business on which I am compelled to trouble you need hardly, I fancy, be put into words."

"Nevertheless, I must so far trouble you," Mr. Sutherland replied, with a supercilious elevation of the eye-brows.

"And yet joint guardians as we are to M. de St. Arnoul's heiress, it cannot surely surprise you that I come to enquire of our ward from you?"

"You must pardon me, however, that I do take the liberty of feeling surprised," Mr. Sutherland rejoined, and then lapsed into silence.

"Mr. Sutherland," replied his visitor, quietly helping himself to the chair which the other had not thought proper as yet to offer, and speaking not only without any manifestation of annoyance at the curt manner of the other, but with an evident desire to smooth away as much as possible the unpleasant feelings which his presence evidently excited; "you are so thoroughly in the dark it seems as to the business that compels me

to intrude, that it may take some time to convince you of its importance; and therefore you must pardon me if albeit uninvited I venture to sit down."

"As you please," said Mr. Sutherland coldly, "only I must pray you to be brief, for being a man of business my time is not entirely at my own disposal."

"I will be as brief as I can," replied the other, "and therefore I will begin by stating at once, and without circumlocution, my firm conviction that your opposition to Madame de St. Arnoul and her daughter is not at all to be attributed to any real doubt in your mind as to the legality of their claims."

"And wherefore may it not, sir," said Mr. Sutherland, leaning his head upon his hand in such a way that his features were concealed.  
"Wherefore may it not?"

"Because," rejoined his guest, in a tone of cutting coldness, "you are a man of the world, and a man of business both, Mr. Sutherland; and you know, and I know, that if your conduct had been dictated by any sense of justice, you

would have boldly put forward your own claim instead of meanly evading theirs."

Mr. Sutherland suddenly raised his head so as to take a long keen glance at his opponent, but dropping it again almost immediately he answered, with the air of one wearied already by the length of the discussion—

" You think so?"

" I do not think it only, I am certain of it," replied Sir Walter; " but if, instead of involving yourself in a set of statements and denials, which will be all the more humiliating, that in the end they must be retracted, you will bear with me a moment longer, I hope to be able to convince you that although duty to my ward compels my present conduct, there are yet other feelings in my heart which render it imperative on me to shield you and your family as much as may be from the shame of an exposure."

" You are very good, I am sure, to interest yourself so much about us," said Mr. Sutherland with an exaggeration of that maddening superciliousness of look and sentiment which he had adopted from the beginning.

"No, sir, I am not very good," Sir Walter answered, warming in spite of himself at the manner in which his advances were repelled, "I am not very good; but there is one in your family (and you know it, sir), whose honor is if possible dearer to me than my own, and for her sake I have come to remonstrate with you in private, when strict justice perhaps demanded that I should have called you publicly to account for your proceedings. In order to convince you however of the uselessness and folly of any further attempt at subterfuge on your part, it is necessary that I should state all I know, and how I know it, of the amount and destination of M. de St. Arnoul's fortune; that part at least that was confided to your care—"

Sir Walter paused for a moment as if considering how he should shape his story, and then went on :

"With all his affection for you, and as the husband of his sister, he did love you most sincerely, M. de St. Arnoul latterly, or perhaps to speak more correctly, from the period of his marriage, never could divest himself of a lurking

dread least you might one day play him false; to speak plainly, he feared that your boundless spirit of speculation, your indefatigable search after wealth, where ever or how ever it could be found, would some day involve you in less honorable paths than those in which you had made your fortune. And this was partly the reason why he concealed his marriage from you. He fancied you would be less scrupulous in the disposal of his consignments if you knew they were not to result ultimately to the benefit of your own family."

"And yet to the last he left all to my management," Mr. Sutherland interrupted him to say. "That savoured little of those lurking fears which, excuse me, if I say it, look very like a trumped up story to give plausibility to your statements."

"As you say," returned the other coldly, "he confided in you to the last, because his heart was ever stronger than his head; and for the sake of his dead sister, whom he idolized, he would not withdraw his affairs from your control, as I must acknowledge, I have more than once latterly counseled him to do."

"No!" Mr. Sutherland bitterly retorted, "of course he would not withdraw his affairs from my control; he only took up with a painted Frenchwoman, and for her sake, and the sake of her base born infant, cut off the son of the sister whom he affected to adore, from the fortune which, if promises are of any value, might be said to have belonged to him already."

"He certainly did marry a young and friendless French girl, exposed by her position to a thousand dangers," replied Sir Walter coldly.

"Married!" repeated Mr. Sutherland, with a curling lip; "bah! Sir Walter. You surely forget that you started with the assumption that you were addressing a man of the world, or you would not try to throw dust in my eyes by any such nonsense as that."

"Mr. Sutherland!" replied Sir Walter, fixing his dark eyes upon that gentleman with an expression beneath which the latter involuntarily lowered his own, "before you commit yourself to further calumnies, it is only fair to tell you that the marriage certificate which you burned in Paris was a copy only, for when Madame de St.

Arnoul, whom you may perhaps have discovered to be any thing but competent to the management of her own affairs, insisted upon bringing that document with her to England in order to show it to her husband's relatives, of whom she stood in not a little awe, I took the responsibility, unknown to her, of withholding the original. You perceive, therefore, that notwithstanding your desperate efforts to efface every proof of the real nature of her connection with M. de St. Arnoul, notwithstanding the even more cruel and unmanly means by which you forced her to sign a paper, confessing to her own dishonour, it is still in her power and in mine to prove her marriage to the world, and to establish the claims of her child to the possession of her husband's fortune. What that fortune is I can state to the last farthing, being, as junior partner of his house, cognisant of his affairs in India; while on his death bed he gave me a written paper containing a very minute and accurate statement of the sums which have been entrusted to your management, and of the various ways in which they have been invested. The bulk of

these was at one time in the funds, but I dare say, Mr. Sutherland, it is there no longer."

"And I say, sir," retorted Mr. Sutherland, "that of this you can merely speak at random. You have not, and cannot bring forward any proof."

"No! but I am in a position to demand that proof of you, sir. The child is at this moment in London, with her mother. This much, I learned by a note, received to-day, on landing."

"I know it," replied Mr. Sutherland, bitterly. "A thousand curses on that smooth-tongued Irishman, who contrived to kidnap her while I was standing by the death-bed of my boy."

"However, the rescue has been accomplished, sir, the effect will be still the same. The child is in London; I can produce her at a moment's notice, and the only condition annexed to her father's will, being thus complied with, I have a right, and can compel you to an account of your stewardship. If the sums entrusted to your care are still in the funds, my task is easy, but if not, I must learn by what authority they have been withdrawn."

"A power of attorney from M. de St. Arnoul would have given me that right," Mr. Sutherland answered after a moment's pause.

"But I have it from the lips of my dying friend that he never furnished you with such a power," replied Sir Walter, coldly.

"If I had, or if I had not, this is not the moment to discuss the point. It is a case to be decided in open court, not in a chamber consultation," Mr. Sutherland added, the least possible tremor for the first time that day perceptible in his voice: "Nor in the house where my son lies dead."

"Mr. Sutherland," replied his visitor, with a sudden softening of both voice and manner. "I had heard something of this great misfortune ere I came up, and believe me, I would not have intruded on your sorrow if I had not hoped instead of adding to them, to remove at least one anxiety which, however lightly you may talk about it, must still, I think, weigh heavily on your mind. If I have seemed rude or unfeeling," Sir Walter continued, after a moment's pause, "you must forgive me, for I have only urged

this unpleasant subject in hopes of convincing you of the folly of persisting in your present views before unfolding a plan by which I hope to save you from the fatal consequences which they must otherwise entail upon you."

"Aye, and indeed!" replied Mr. Sutherland, with a keen and rapid glance at Sir Walter's countenance. "And do you not see that if things be as you state them, they are past remedy altogether?"

"On the contrary," said Sir Walter. "The remedy is easy—at an immense sacrifice I admit, but still of a sacrifice, I am most willing to make, for the sake, as I said before, of one who must otherwise share in your disgrace. M. Arnoul's will contains a requisition that the affairs of his house should be wound up, and his daughter put in possession of a settled income, instead of being left exposed to the vicissitudes of trade. I also mean to retire from business, and all or such a portion as may be needed of the property which will accrue to me in this final settlement, I am willing to devote to covering your debt towards our common ward, and thus shielding you from

the public exposure that otherwise must attach itself to your name."

"Are you aware of the magnitude of that debt?" Mr. Sutherland could not refrain from asking.

"To the last farthing, Mr. Sutherland, but as both in law and justice, I am answerable for the fortunes of my ward, I can of course only shield your misappropriation of it at the expense of such a personal sacrifice as I propose."

"It is the fortune of a Nabob, and what security do you demand for its repayment?"

"Your simple word to that effect, for I firmly believe this unhappy business has been the accident of your career, while a strict sense of honor was its rule. To that sense of honor I confide for repayment without interest as soon as the affairs of your house will admit of such disbursements; and even if they never do, I am rich enough without it, and for the sake of Evelyn de Burghe, shall be willing to let it go."

"Sir Walter St. Clair," replied Mr. Sutherland moved in spite of himself by the generous confidence of the other: "I would not accept

your offer, even were it needed, which it is not. This very day's post announces the success of a long doubtful speculation by which more than the fortune you would sacrifice is realized. Truly are we the playthings of our fate; yesterday such news would have had its value for me; to-day it is worth nothing."

"Fate," repeated Sir Walter, in a half musing manner, "surely man is his own fate, since it is by his own actions he must stand or fall."

"Certainly it is possible," said the other quietly "for I must confess that in my own case that child's fortune had such an attraction for me, that even were the necessity for doing so removed, I believe I should still have risked all for the purpose of retaining it."

"And you say this to my face," cried Sir Walter in utter astonishment at the recklessness of the avowal.

"To your face I say it. Mother and child, I hate them both, and revenge has ever been dearer to me than money. Do you wonder at this avowal! Sir, yesterday I would have shielded my honor at the cost even of my life, to

day it is worthless as any other bauble. No son is left me to inherit the possession."

"Believe me, I feel for your bereavement," said Sir Walter with real feeling, "it is a reason the more for not pressing too hardly upon you; yet before I go I must impose two conditions on you."

"Name them," Mr. Sutherland answered in a tone of most supreme indifference, rising at the same time and standing with his back to the fireplace.

"First that you destroy in my presence the forgery by which you have obtained this money; secondly that you sign an acknowledgment of the precise sum due from you to St. Arnoul's heiress."

"Sir Walter, I have already said it," Mr. Sutherland answered, folding his arms and looking full in the face of his visitor, "revenge is dearer to me than safety, fortune, honor, or all else besides, and so I will not so much as lift a finger to help that wretched woman and her bantling to their fortune."

"And yet you do not hesitate to acknowledge they have been defrauded?"

"Privately and without witness I can have no difficulty in avowing it," the other answered with a grim smile, "but for the rest you must get back her fortune the best way you can, for I at least have no idea of co-operating with you."

"Have you forgotten, sir," replied Sir Walter vehemently and indignantly; "that albeit there is no witness of our present interview, yet the child herself, whom you are pursuing with such vindictive cruelty, may have a tale to disclose about your dealings with her which will make even your forgery by comparison look pale."

"I know it, Sir Walter, and I know, moreover, that the men who were taken prisoners at the Red house last night, and that black eyed devil, Esther, who has somehow managed to go free, can not only corroborate her tale, but add wherewithal to make it a question of the gallows. Let them say their say, poor fools; I care not at all for that, or rather I shall not care at all when the moment arrives for making their disclosures."

"I trust, sir, you will think better of my proposal," said Sir Walter, rising to conclude his visit, "at all events I will give you an hour to reflect upon it, and at the end of that time will take the liberty of waiting on you once more to receive your final answer."

"With all my heart, sir; I shall be here to give it. In the meantime perhaps you would like an interview with Miss de Burgh."

Something like a flash of joy passed over Sir Walter's face, but he replied in the same measured manner he had adopted from the beginning:

"I was about to ask it, sir, albeit half afraid lest at such a moment even the visit of an old friend might be felt as an intrusion."

"Not at all," replied Mr. Sutherland graciously, "if you will follow me, I will conduct you to her presence."

## CHAPTER XIII.

IN obedience to Mr. Sutherland's request, Sir Walter followed him through the entire suite of reception rooms until he arrived at the great drawing-room. There his conductor paused, and his face grew yet more ghastly in its pallor than it had been before, but after a moment's hesitation he threw the door wide open, and said aloud with the same air of recklessness that had marked all the latter part of his communication with Sir Walter:

“ You will find Miss de Burgh in there. In an hour's time I shall expect you in the study; till then, adieu.”

The room into which he was thus suddenly

introduced was so dark, that for a second, Sir Walter felt as if he had lost his sight; but as his eyes became accustomed to the twilight, he perceived that not only were the shutters closed, but the walls entirely hung with black, the general gloom being rather heightened than relieved by a few wax-tapers, interspersed amid the drapery. At the further end of the room was an open coffin, placed upon high tressels, and with feathers waving over it, and flowing drapery, and all the dreary adornments of the tomb most profusely lavished on it. The blood rushed tumultuously to Sir Walter's heart as he took in the gloomy aspect of the room. Could it be that Evelyn was also dead, and that her step-father had brought him there in bitter mockery to converse with her in her coffin? For a moment he stood still in his terrible suspense, and then the figure of a lady kneeling with her back towards the door, caught his eye, and he staggered forward. At the sound of footsteps she arose, but almost ere she had time to turn her head, he sprang forward, and caught her in his arms. Evelyn burst into tears. They were the first

she had shed since her brother's death, and feeling as if they were saving her from madness, for a little time, she suffered them to flow in silence, hardly conscious of anything save the relief of weeping in the arms of one who better and more perfectly than all the world besides, could appreciate and sympathise in her sorrow. At last another thought seemed to strike her, and gently, and yet still in silence, she tried to withdraw herself from his embraces, but he only held her closer while he whispered :

“ Nay, Evelyn, I guess your thought. But, believe me, you may fearlessly rest here.”

And then, when with the confiding docility of a child she had hid her face once more upon his shoulder, he went on in the same measured voice in which he had spoken first, though a deep and ever increasing tenderness gradually impassioned all its accents.

“ Yes, indeed you may rest here, safely here, since no one has ever shared with you the heart you lean on—no other image has replaced yours there! Evelyn! whatever be my other faults I have not been unfaithful—I could not dearest,

even if I would—and if I have sought wealth and honour, 'twas only in the hope that your task of duty finished here, you would mercifully share them with me."

"Oh hush! hush!" cried Evelyn now breaking in earnest from him. "Do but ask me to listen to such words—not here, not now."

"Not here, not now—surely not beloved one! I could not be so unfeeling—yet leave me not entirely in suspense; remember I have waited long and patiently. Tell me at least it has not been in vain."

Evelyn was sobbing too bitterly to be able to reply in words, but she put her hand in his in a way to make him feel he had no cause for further doubt, and then leading him towards the coffin, drew down the cloth that covered her brother's face from view. Sir Walter gazed upon it in deep emotion. When he had last seen Frederick he was a handsome, spoiled, high-spirited lad, of fourteen or thereabouts. Now he could scarcely realize the fact that he again beheld him in the form so mute, so passionless and cold that lay stretched out there before him.

"To die—so young—and oh! my God, such a death to die," Evelyn murmured almost convulsively, as she looked through her tears upon the silent dead.

"Dear Evelyn," replied Sir Walter sadly, "I only arrived this morning, and know little or nothing of these sad events. How has it happened? How did he die? I trust, at any rate, in peace with God."

"Yes, thanks to the mercy of that never-failing Providence, he did," she answered. "He retained his senses to the last, and all his thoughts were of sorrow for the past and of gratitude for the mercy which had preserved him to repentance. Yes, yes, Walter, in the midst of all this sorrow we have much reason to thank God. The very act by which he met his death was an act of mercy to another, and surely we may hope that confidently for him which he gave his own life so ungrudgingly to bestow."

She sat down and covered her face with her hands for she was utterly exhausted by sorrow, and in the midst of the solemn silence that ensued, a voice murmured softly in her ear—

“Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Evelyn turned her swimming eyes gratefully on Sir Walter, and she was about to answer in the same strain, but another and very different train of thought came suddenly upon her, and she could not forbear shuddering as she said :

“But oh, Walter, Walter! if I could only tell you how he died, and by whose hand. It was his father’s—he killed him—his own father, and the thought seems to stifle me.”

“Killed him! Good God, Evelyn, you are raving—that is to say, the thing is impossible, you must be mistaken.”

“I am not mistaken—I am not, Walter. I do not mean to say that he took a knife and stabbed him. But it was his machinations against that poor child; but for that, Frederick would have been alive this minute.”

Evelyn’s sobs now became so convulsive that fearful of further exciting her feelings by his questions, Sir Walter sat down quietly beside her to wait until the first violence of her feelings had subsided, when the sound of a pistol in

the direction of Mr. Sutherland's study caused them both to start from their seats and look enquiringly on each other. All that he had heard and seen in those last few hours rushed at once to Sir Walter's memory: the strange behaviour of Mr. Sutherland in their recent interview, the risk he had run of ruin; the dishonesty laid bare, the reckless avowal of his guilt, and open defiance of its consequences, the death of the son upon whom his hopes had all been centred; that too, if Evelyn's surmises were correct, as the result of his own evil plotting against another, all confirmed his first impression and left him little doubt of the catastrophe that had occurred. Evelyn's pale face and dilated eye showed him that the same thought had already struck her, therefore he did not hesitate to say,

"Evelyn, he has shot himself. Stay here while I go to his assistance."

But unable to bear up any longer amid the horrors that were closing round her, Evelyn clung so helplessly to him, that feeling at last as if it would be more cruel to leave her there alone than even to take her to another death

scene, he half led, half bore her along with him to the study.

It was even as he had imagined. Frank and the doctor were already in the room, but Mr. Sutherland was dead. The ball had entered the brain, and life must have been extinct in the same moment. As soon as this had been thoroughly ascertained, the doctor succeeded in persuading Evelyn to retire, and one or two of the men servants being left in charge of the body, Frank beckoned Sir Walter to another room, took the packet which his uncle had given him that morning from his pocket, and showed it to him saying :

" This may explain his motive. He gave it to me this morning, doubtless for that very purpose. We will open it when Dr. Spencer comes down stairs. I sent him word that I wanted to see him as soon as Miss de Burghe could spare him.

They had not long to wait, for the Doctor almost immediately afterwards made his appearance to tell them that Evelyn had regained her calmness, and was exerting herself to soothe poor

Wyllie, from whom it had been impossible to conceal the catastrophe, as he had both heard the report of the pistol and seen the rush of servants to the study. After a little more desultory conversation, during which the Doctor and Frank renewed their acquaintance with Sir Walter, whom they now remembered as having been an almost daily visitor to the family in the olden times, the packet entrusted to Frank's care was opened, and was found to contain two documents,—a will, by which he left his whole fortune to his nephew, subject to the condition of taking the name of Sutherland, and a letter, in which he stated that the death of the only son he had ever loved having taken from him every desire to live, he had determined to destroy himself, and so prevent disgrace attaching itself to the name for which he had laboured all his life; and which he now bequeathed to Frank, trusting to his talents and energy to restore it to its ancient lustre, and leaving Wyllie entirely to his generosity to be provided for, or not as might best suit with his own interests.

On further examination the will proved to be

a perfectly valid document, drawn out that very morning, and signed and sealed in presence of Parker and Simonds, the former however being stated in the accompanying letter to be the only one of the two acquainted with its contents.

“Poor Wyllie!” the Doctor could not forbear saying, after the first moment of blank surprise, “it does certainly seem rather hard that having never possessed his father’s love he should be ousted of his father’s fortune also.”

“There is another will some where, is there not, Doctor?” Frank asked in a musing manner.

“Yes, one he made about two years ago; but of what avail? This to all intents and purposes constitutes you his lawful heir.”

“Then the sooner it is destroyed the better,” was the prompt reply; and lighting a match, Frank instantly set fire to both documents, watching them until the last spark had died away, and even crushing the ashes afterwards with his heel to make certain of their being entirely consumed. Meantime the Doctor and Sir Walter looked on in silence, until unable any

longer to restrain his feelings, the formed seized Frank by the hand, exclaiming:

"I must shake hands with you, Frank, if I die for it the next minute. I always said you were a noble fellow, and by St. George, and St. Patrick to boot, you are even nobler than I thought you!"

"Surely, Doctor," replied Frank, with something almost like displeasure in his manner, "surely you could never have thought me capable of such injustice? And now that yonder paper is destroyed, and that Wyllie is as he ought to be, sole possessor of his father's fortune, I know I can depend upon you both that he never shall have the pain of hearing the unkindness and cruelty that have been dealt towards him to the last."

"You may rely upon our discretion, I am sure," said Sir Walter, earnestly. "And you must excuse me if I venture to echo the doctor's sentiment, and to say that yours is a noble action, since thousands of men there are, who, honorable in all else besides, would yet never

have hesitated to avail themselves of the fortune whieh you have consigned voluntarily to the flames. I shall always esteem it both an honor, and happiness, if you will admit me to your friendship."

"The best way to gain it then," said Frank, shaking warmly the hand which Sir Walter gave him, "will be by never again alluding to this transaction. I will see Parker myself; and, I am sure, for Wyllie's sake, he will hold his tongue; but if you will come with me, Sir Walter, your presence, I think, will add weight to my request."

"Aye! aye!" muttered the doctor to himself, as the young man closed the door behind them. "I'll be as close as wax to every one else; but Evelyn shall know to her cost the heart she has lost in refusing that fellow. The other, of course, is the man from India. Well, well, it is a comfort at least to think that Frank will never again be as poor as he has been, for I know old Sutherland left him a slapping legacy in his first will, and if he hasn't every penny that I possess when

my turn comes for leaving this bad world, my name's not Jack Spencer; and I don't come on the mother's side of the old Milesian blood of the O'Haras!"

## CONCLUSION.

RATHER more than a year had elapsed since the catastrophe which closed our last chapter, when Dr. Spencer found himself one morning standing on the steps of a small but perfectly respectable hotel in his favourite city of Southampton.

His enquiries of the waiter being answered in the affirmative, he was ushered into a parlour on the ground floor, where the man told him the person he was seeking already waited his coming.

This person proved to be woman, young and very striking in her appearance, though dressed in as neat and unpretending a manner as pos-

sible. She rose as the door opened, and was advancing eagerly, when some sudden embarrassment seized upon her, and she remained standing in the middle of the room, as if uncertain whether to go forward or recede. The Doctor on his part seemed to share her perplexity. He dropt his cane, frowned till his great eye brows met again, and then all at once seizing her by both hands, led her to the window without saying a word.

"And so it is yourself then, and nobody else who has walked into your shoes, Queen Esther," he cried, as soon as he had concluded his survey, and shaking both the hands he held warmly and affectionately as was his wont. "Really, you have grown to look so prim and demure, and so little like the gipsy queen of olden times, that you must excuse your friends if they find it difficult to recognize you."

"Ah, Sir," said Esther softly, while some few tears rolled quietly down her cheeks, "I hope there are other changes also besides the outside one of which you speak."

"Changes! Hey!—what! You don't tell

fortunes any more, Queen Esther? Well, I am very glad to hear it, for it is all lies and rubbish, as nobody knows better than yourself;—very bewildering to the young, and *rayther* vexations sometimes to the old. And so you are still bent on this foolish expedition, I presume, or I should not find you here this morning?"

"Oh! Sir, do not call it foolish," said Esther, the smile which the first part of the Doctor's speech had called to her lips fading suddenly away. Ever since Dick was sent out I have had no rest or comfort for thinking how I might get after him."

"And so you've chosen to emigrate in order to be near him, foolish girl? And perhaps, after all, you won't be allowed even to set eyes upon him twice in the whole seven years he has still before him out there."

"Perhaps not, Sir," sobbed Esther; "but at least if he is sick, or ill, or anything should happen to him, I shall hear it, while if I remained in England he might be dead years and years afore I knowed anything at all about it."

"And when the seven years are over, Esther?" said the Doctor gravely.

"Then, Sir, he has promised to marry me, and settle down into an honest sober man for the rest of his days."

"And you believe him, Esther?"

"Oh! Sir, you wouldn't ask me not to?" she replied, sobbing bitterly at the bare idea.

"My poor girl, I am sorry to distress you," he answered kindly, "but I cannot myself help having some doubts upon the subject."

"But you wouldn't, Sir, if you'd been with him as I was the day before he sailed," cried Esther eagerly. "Oh! Sir, if you believe me, he told me as that dreadful night at the Red House, with the murder of that sweet lady's brother, is never out of his head a moment, and that, and Nightshade's execution, has been a lesson to him as he'll never forget, I'm certain."

"Ah," said the Doctor, "the fate of Nightshade has been a warning to more than Dick. The boy who brought us your message that night has taken the hint; and become one of the steadiest and most industrious of the lot, at the

reformatory school, where we have placed him."

"I am very glad indeed to hear it," said Esther, earnestly. "Bill were always very good natured, and it was more bad teaching and wild sports like that led him astray, than anything really perwerse in his disposition."

"That I can readily believe," quoth the doctor, "and I only wish for your sake, Queen Esther, that I was as easy about Dick's reformation as I am about Bill's."

"And why not, sir?" said Esther, in a half affronted tone. "Nobody never had a kinder heart nor poor Dick, when he only let it have its way; as I've a better right to know nor most folks, seeing all he done for me ever since I were a child."

"Well, Esther, I am sure I've no wish to dash your hopes, or judge Dick harshly; and as the thing is as good as done now, there is no use saying any more about it, that is certain! As to your own welfare I am very easy upon that score, since one who may well be styled the guardian angel of the emigrant, has promised to procure

you a good situation on your arrival, and to have a mother's eye upon you during your residence out there."

"I am sure, sir, I am most grateful to her, and still more to you and the dear young lady," said Esther with much feeling.

"Ah, by-the-way, you mustn't call her the 'young lady' any more, for she's a reg'lar old matron by this time—married a month ago; and will probably arrive here from her wedding tour this morning."

"Married!" repeated Esther. "To the gemman I seed with her that night at the Red House?"

"No, confound it," said the doctor impatiently, and then seeing her astonished look he added, "But to a very good fellow for all that. One Sir Walter St. Clair. But, bye-the-way, you know all about it yourself already, Queen Esther, so there is no need for me to say anything more."

"No, indeed, sir," said Esther simply. "They kept us very close at the Good Shepherd, and I knowed nothing wotever of wot were passing

outside, excepting what you or the young lady herself chose to tell me."

"Oh, I don't mean in that way," said the doctor significantly. "But the fact is that the individual in question happening to be a gentleman over the seas, I thought you were quite as likely to be well informed on the subject as myself."

Esther could not resist a smile.

"Oh, sir," she said, "you spoke so loud. And after all, I heard only just them few words as I passed under the wall outside."

"Well," said the doctor, "the fact is, he had waited so long that I couldn't in conscience let him wait any longer, so I insisted at last on Mistress Evelyn's giving him, without more demur, that pretty hand of hers upon which you foretold such wondrous fortunes. The marriage took place about six weeks ago, and they are now going abroad, where I am invited to accompany them in capacity of cicerone."

"And Aileen?" enquired Esther, under her breath. "Her mother is dead you told me."

"Poor soul, she never recovered her Paris

adventure," replied the doctor. " Well, well, a silly pretty little doll of a woman is no great loss in the way of a parent, and Aileen is very happy again under the guardianship of Lady St. Clair, whom she loves already as if she were a mother, and who will always, you may be sure, be a mother to her."

" My rose-bud, Aileen," murmured Esther, wiping away the tears that would come at the old name. " But she ain't strong neither, they tell me; and I'm sore afeard, lest her living among us has been too much for she, and that she's like to suffer from it a long while yet."

" Poor child, she is not strong certainly," Dr. Spencer answered; " and it is for her sake chiefly, and for Wyllie's, that Sir Walter has consented to expatriate himself for a couple of winters, always on the condition that I go as medical attendant, and engage (which I do right willingly) to turn them out strong and healthy at the end of that period."

" Ah, how I should like to see her," poor Esther could not forbear sighing to herself.

"Would you so? then come along," cried the doctor, "I told her and Wyllie (you have no idea what a nice little couple they make already) to meet us at the pier, and I also left word at the terminus for the bridal party to follow us down there if the train should arrive in time. The ship sails at the turn of the tide, and we have no time to lose, so come along—but stay! first I must see about your luggage."

"It went down by the omnibus an hour ago, sir. The man told me it would be put on board along with the passengers. I only wanted your coming."

"All right, so come along," cried the doctor, and in spite of all resistance he tucked Esther's arm under his own and marched out of the house in triumph.

"I see'd old Judy before leaving Hammersmith," said Esther as they walked along, "and she were very proud and grateful for all that you and the young lady have done to make her comfortable. So also was Widow Darville and poor Jim."

"Ah, Jim has lost his wandering fits and is

apprenticed to a gardener," said the doctor; "that was Frank's doing, and he is such a sharp clever lad that I have no doubt he will one day be the making of his family. As to Judy, she is set up for life—new barrow, cellar full of apples and oranges, Widow Darville for a partner, and the custom of all the ragged schools in the neighbourhood to boot; that was my notion, and I am rather proud of it, I assure you. She will be a rich woman before you see old England again, Queen Esther; that is to say if apples do not fail, and there is no vexatious tax laid on the consumption of oranges."

"I shall never see it agin," said Esther, in a low quiet voice. "Dick and me means to settle there if I makes money enough, as I hopes to in my service, to buy us a little land."

"And if you don't," said the doctor, "you know, you have friends in England who will not fail you for the purchase."

"Oh, it is too much, sir—too much," sobbed Esther. "I never can repay such goodness."

"Yes you can, Queen Esther," the Doctor gravely and impressively replied. "You will

have more than repaid it, when you have proved that it was not thrown away upon you."

"I will do my best," said Esther, in that grave earnest manner that said more than many words of the truth and strength of her resolve.

"And the gentleman whom you saw at the Red house," said the Doctor, after a long pause, "Have you forgotten him, Esther, that you have nothing to ask about him?"

"No, indeed, sir. I should be very ungrateful indeed if I did, a'rter all he done for we in the fire that night. He's made himself a great London doctor, hasn't he, Sir?"

"No, Esther," replied the Doctor, true even in that moment to his old prejudices; "not a great London doctor, but a great doctor in London. And let me tell you, he will be the only honest one I know of there, by reason that he means to take no fees, but to give all his time and talents to the poor."

"And it will be only like he to do so," said Esther fervently, but she could say no more, for they were close to the pier, and ere her foot had touched it Aileen was in her arms; Wyllie,

who had been the little girl's companion, standing, half amused, half touched, on one side to watch the meeting. He had grown tall and strong-looking, and his features, though still beautiful, had lost much of that sickly delicacy which had given him before the aspect of a girl. Suddenly he touched Esther's arm; she looked up, and almost before she knew what she was about, she was on her knees before Evelyn St. Clair.

It was very brief that interview, though it contained, for all concerned, the hopes and memories of many years. Time was flying fast, and at a sign from his master, Denis seized the sobbing Esther, and carried her almost by main force down to the boat which was waiting to put off to the vessel, and never left her again until he had seen her safe on board. The party who remained behind still lingered where they were in order to have one last glimpse at Esther, and they were near enough to catch even the words of the farewell song that rose from the crowded decks of the Irish emigrant ship as she steamed slowly past the jetty.

## THE EMIGRANT'S SONG.

Sail on ! there is hope in the high singing blast,  
 There is hope in the sunbeam that brightens the billow ;  
 And hope, while thy lot on wide waters is cast,  
 Will give joy to thy day dreams and sleep to thy pillow !

Sail on ! and the future is thine to command ;  
 Be but honest and true, and upstirring and bold !  
 Shake the dust from thy feet, and put strength in thy hand,  
 And then grapple with fortune, to have and to hold.

Of Erin think not, lest thy heart be unmanned,  
 Oh, speak not her name, lest thy feelings betray thee !  
 But onward, still on, for that far distant land  
 Has need of thy strength, and with freedom will pay thee !

*at*  
 Let past be the past—it is buried and gone,  
 Never linger those looks on the land of thy birth ;  
 Remember this land is a freeman's alone,  
 Where a freeman is valued at what he is worth !

*on*  
 And if, when the struggle is over and won,  
 Thou canst feel thou hast conquered in honor and truth,  
 Can't count o'er the deeds which thy manhood has done,  
 Nor blush for the impulse that stirred ~~up~~ thy youth.

Oh, then when the sun is far down in the west,  
 And thou seekest repose 'neath some now foreign tree,  
 Then think on the Isle that to thee is still blest,  
 Altho' forced from her shores by weird famine to flee !

And gather thy sons and thy daughters around thee,  
 Search thy joys and thy sorrows and make them their own,  
 Speak home to their hearts of the ties that have bound thee  
 To the hearthstead of childhood, now silent and lone !

*out*  
*s!*  
*her*  
 Aye ! speak ~~it~~ if thou wilt, till the tear-drop is gushing,  
 Let thy words from the deep heart their eloquence borrow,  
 While the pulse of thy foreign-born daughter is rushing  
 Towards the Isle which ~~is~~ rulers have baptised in sorrow !

Thro' the tale of thy life, weave the threads of her story,

Yet curse not the cruel and strong who brought her, ~~because she~~  
But look upward and hope that a new wreath of glory,  
May be twined round her brow by the true hearts still ~~who~~  
left her. ~~leave her~~

And well may'st thou hope it, if conscience attest ~~me~~,

That thy conduct has brightened the page of her fame,  
And e'en for thy sake, that thy country is blest  
By those who once spurned at the emigrant's name.

~~from Standard of former day native lan-~~  
~~toestring~~  
~~May bless, who ever spurned at the~~  
~~early ranks her~~

TO THE MEMORY OF  
THOSE UNDER WHOSE LOVING AUSPICES  
THIS BOOK WAS COMMENCED,  
IT IS DEDICATED ON ITS CONCLUSION,  
BY  
THE AUTHORESS.



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